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HOW THE BRITISH OCCUPIED BENGAL

A Corrected Account of
the 1756-1765 Events

RAM GOPAL

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INTRODUCTION

Documentation and Errors : A Review

No PERIOD of the Indian history has been written upon as profusely as the British period, and no historical account has been tarnished as artfully by subjective and tendentious handling and suppression of the source material as of this one. Between Robert Orme, who was a contemporary of Clive, and Henry Dodwell, who distinguished himself in the current century, there were dozens of historians, who wrote or re-wrote Indian history. Orme was a servant of the East India Company and was posted in Fort St. George, Madras, when the foundation of the British Empire was laid in Bengal after the Plassey treachery. He began chronicling contemporary events and writing history, while he was yet in the employ of the Company. Such being Orme's position among the many writers of Indian history, his work is bound to be looked upon with faith and authenticity. Dodwell had the other advantage, which a contemporary does not always enjoy : the passage of time had lifted the veil from confidential documents, and he was in a position to produce a more authoritative account. He made use of a mass of material, and his works are laden with copious references, giving this impression of authority.

Other writers had similar access to the source material, and some of them took considerable pains wading through it. But mere evidence or fact of the availability of fulsome material is not a proof of its objective use. If a writer's mind is vitiated by preconceptions and tendencies, his sifting will be subjective; his discrimination about utility and relevance will be partisan. The way most of the British writers of the British period of Indian history have sifted their material, dismissed important facts as irrelevant, placed credence in the suspect and the guilty in preference to the credible, is shocking. They wrote when the British Empire in India was in the making, or was struggling to maintain itself, or was engaged in the suppression of rising nationalism. Whether the consideration that they would not denounce men of their race in difficult times influenced their writings is difficult to ascertain.

A wholly true exposition of a history, when it is still being made,

is not always possible, especially when it is a history of the domination of one nation over another. Orme wrote at the time when the Court of Directors of the East India Company were decrying territorial expansion and their employees' corrupt practices, and the employees were telling them that the empire was being thrust on them. Every armed involvement in political affairs of Indian princes was utilised for, if not wholly motivated by, personal gains by leading servants of the Company in India. They withheld from the Directors the fact of personal gains and extortions they made from the vanquished parties. Orme himself was found guilty of extortion. In 1761, 'the Directors expressed themselves assured that he had extorted large sums from the Nawab of Carnatac'.[1] Immoral deeds of the servants, which made no mean contribution to the making of the British Empire, generally find no place in Orme's accounts. Glaring omissions discredit him as a historian; though loaded with facts, his work smacks of a lawyer's brief where he wishes to suggest justification of English intervention in Indian political affairs.

Most of the historians who succeeded him followed the line and pattern of presentation laid down by him. The latest among them is Dodwell. His *Dupleix and Clive*, which gives a documented account of how the British acquired political supremacy in Bengal, was first published in 1920, when India was passing through a period of acute political turmoil, and politically minded Hindus and Muslims had joined hands over the Khilafat question. The time of the publication of *Dupleix and Clive* perhaps happened to coincide with the Khilafat movement; but one wonders why Dodwell, casting aside all the documentary evidence in his possession, refers to 'Hindu officials', and to the English as their protectors. This is fantastic as we shall presently see.

The period of the present work, *How the British Occupied Bengal*, begins with the accession of Mirza Muhammad, generally known as Siraj-ud-daula, to the throne of Bengal. Orme, Dodwell, and others introduce Siraj-ud-daula as a torturer, murderer and tyrant. 'Born without campassion,' says Orme, 'it was one of the amusements of Mirza Mahmud's childhood to torture birds and animals . . . he lived in every kind of intemperance and debauchery, and more especially in drinking spirituous liquors to an excess, which inflamed his passions, and impaired the little understanding

[1] Henry Davison Love, *The Indian Records Series: Vestiges of Old Madras,* vol. II, p. 519.

with which he was born.'[2] Dodwell presents him as a heartless monster who had 'pregnant women ripped open to gratify his curiosity'; and had 'boatloads of people upset in the Ganges to watch the agonies of the drowning'.[3] Siraj-ud-daula on the one side and the English on the other are made to appear as characters of a novel, with the novelist exciting his readers' hatred for the one and sympathy for the other. The entire tenor of presentation is designed to prepare the reader to receive the chastisement of Siraj-ud-daula, as also of Mir Jafar and Mir Kasim, with equanimity and with a sense of justification. Whether Siraj-ud-daula was a torturer, murderer and vicious tyrant or not—though a contrary version is to be found in the accounts of several contemporary servants of the Company—is not at all relevant to the affairs which compelled him to assert his authority as ruler of Bengal. Only when the intention is to befog those affairs, will a historian invoke extraneous material in order to lead his readers astray.

Unlike earlier foreign rulers of India, the British did not acquire the empire by invasion. The story of the growth of the so-called British India is strikingly different from that of the imperial powers that preceded the British. In their case, invasion and aggresion is an established fact: it cannot be denied. An invader acquires power by his superior armed might, and is not ashamed of it. But the East India Company forbade aggression, and its servants in India, when they embroiled themselves in political affairs in spite of its orders, had to explain, by suppressing facts and making misstatements, that they were the aggrieved party, and not the aggressors. The same explanation was given to the people of England. This attitude of mind of the servants became the attitude of mind of British historians also. They said Siraj-ud-daula was the aggressor, and they his victims. British rule is no more in India, and patriotic prejudices and national expediencies should no more prevent British writers from telling the truth.

One of the causes why Siraj-ud-daula invaded the English settlements in Bengal was the construction by the English of some works with a view to augmenting the fortification of Fort William at Calcutta. Firstly, the works were started and partially carried out without the permission of the Government of Bengal; and secondly, they were not demolished when the Nawab took offence

[2] Robert Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan,* vol. II, p. 47.
[3] Henry Dodwell, *Dupleix and Clive,* p. 122.

at them and in spite of his repeated orders. About these additional works, Orme presents the following account:

> In the beginning of April letters had been received from England, informing the Presidency that war with France was inevitable, and ordering them to put the settlement in a state of defence; but to do this was impossible without building the fort anew. However a great number of labourers were sent to repair a line of guns which extended on the brink of the river in front of the western side of the fort.[4]

The English were taking meticulous care to conceal their new construction from the Nawab, but the Nawab came to know of it. As Orme himself says:

> Notwithstanding the diligence which had been employed to expel the spies employed by the Nabob in Calcutta, several found means to remain undiscovered; and, instigated most probably by the head spy, represented in their letters to the Durbar, that the English were very busy in raising strong fortifications. The Nawab whose cowardice easily led him to believe anything that alarmed his fears, gave entire credit to the report.[5]

If Orme is to be believed, the necessity of making additions to the fortification was felt 'in the beginning of April' 1756, so as to make the English defences against the French stronger, and it was the Nawab's 'cowardice' which made him unnecessarily panicky. Orme's account ignores, perhaps deliberately, vital facts connected with the additions to the fortification. The necessity of additions was not felt for the first time in April 1756, nor was the apprehension of an Anglo-French war the cause. In fact, additions had been decided upon two years before, and the Court of Directors had suggested the fear of a French aggression as an excuse to persuade the Bengal ruler (Aliwardi Khan was then Nawab of the province) to permit new constructions. The plan for strengthening Fort William was prepared by Colonel Scott, and to this the Court of Directors gave their approval with the following instructions in their letter dated 29 November 1754:

> We observe Collonel Scott laid a Project before the Board for

[4] Orme, *op. cit.*, p. 54. [5] *Ibid.*

securing our Settlement from any Attacks from the Country Forces which you were of Opinion in the present Juncture ought to be guarded against. ... Do not begin or make any Progress in the Works until they have your Sentiments Leave and Concurrence. The reason of this restriction arises from our apprehensions that if they are begun without the previous Consent of the Country Government or at least such a Connivance as you shall judge will be as effectual as their Consent, Wee may expend great sums of money and either be entirely prevented from Finishing them or lye at their Mercy for leave to proceed at an Expence not to be Borne, that these Apprehensions are not without foundation appears by Collonel Scott's Letter to us of the 2nd March last in which wee are informed that the French had been stopt for two Years and upwards from finishing their Projected Works for the Security of Chandenagore.

In order therefore for obtaining a Propper Grant or Connivance from the Country Government for leave to fortifye Fort William without any Obstructions or Impediment you are hereby directed to make such Applications to the Nabob and the Members of his Durbar as you shall judge will be most likely to be attended with Success, and as wee are sensible no Favours can be obtained from such a Mercenary Government as that of Bengal without Money wee do empower you to Dispose of any Sums to the Nabob and to such others as you shall think propper provided the several Sums so to be Disbursed do not altogether exceed One hundred thousand Rupees. The Manner of Conducting this Affair wee shall leave entirely to your Discretion and shall only say that the Great Age of the Nabob and the present emptyness of his Coffres seem to be circumstances greatly in favour of an immediate Application being attended with Success. ... You must at the same time make the Government sencible that wee have no Intentions to render ourselves Formidable to them but that our only View in Erecting any Works is to Protect our Property against the Attempts and Designs of any European Powers.[6]

It is clear from the Directors' letter that the work on the additions was not to be started until 'consent' of the government had been obtained or until bribes had ensured 'connivance'. It is also clear that the French, who had themselves been refused permis-

[6] C. R. Wilson, *The Indian Records: Old Fort William in Bengal,* vol. II, pp. 15, 18-20.

sion by the Nawab's Government to carry out similar works, did not constitute a danger, and that additional fortification was intended to secure the English 'settlement from any attacks from the country forces'. Colonel Scott, who drew out the scheme of 'the military works and fortifications'[7] and on which the above instructions of the Directors were issued, made no mention of the French; on the contrary he referred to Indian powers. Nay, Scott, as his secretary, Charles F. Noble, wrote (22 September 1756) after his death, to the Select Committee of Fort Saint George, entertained a hope of success in a revolution that could be brought about with the active help of the English, a revolution that would turn out to their advantage and against the Nawab.[8]

The authorities of Fort William forwarded the Directors' letter to Watts, chief of the English factory at Kasimbazar, on 6 August 1755, seeking his opinion as to the way they should proceed. Watts said in his reply dated 15 August:

> I must declare to you Gentlemen that I think a previous Application to the Nabob for Leave to Fortifye Calcutta a Step highly Improper for Us to take For in case the Nabob should absolutely refuse Us his Permission We must at Once give over All Thoughts of Fortifying or do it in Defiance of Him. ... The Sums We are at Liberty to offer Part whereof must of Necessity be divided amongst his Ministers would I fear appear to him very inconsiderable.[9]

They therefore put the work in hand without permission of the government, and contrary to the instructions of the Directors who had emphasised that permission or consent of connivance must first be obtained. That the work was started and partly carried out and was 'against a Country Enemy' is admitted in the letter dated 28 September 1755, Fort William, to the Court of Directors: 'We shall pay due regard to your orders in regard to the Fortifications Colonell Scott had projected for the defence of the place against a Country Enemy which are carrying on agreeable to his Instructions, but are not yet near finished.'[10]

Again in the letter dated 21 February 1756, Fort William, reporting the progress of the work, it was said: 'The Redoubt at

[7] S. C. Hill, *Bengal in 1756-1757*, vol. III, pp. 326-8.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *The Indian Records, op. cit.*, p. 28. [10] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Perrins being nigh Compleated.'[11] The works were put under the supervision of engineer Bartholomew Plaisted and assistant engineer O'Hara. The Fort William authorities' letters to the Directors make no mention of the work having been started without permission, and one can justifiably infer that the truth was withheld deliberately.

More details about the fortification and the patience Siraj-ud-daula showed in demanding of the English to demolish the new works, whose construction betrayed violation of his authority as Nawab of Bengal and gave him cause for anxiety, will be found at the appropriate place in the book. The above account is enough to prove that Orme's account is misleading. Dodwell also skips over this part of the story of fortifications, and cautiously conveys the impression that the additions were 'intended to protect the place against a French attack',[12] and that the Nawab had unnecessarily grown panicky.

When the new works were being executed, Aliwardi Khan lay seriously ill—after a few months the illness proved fatal—and Siraj-ud-daula was acting as Nawab. Much of the work had already been done when Siraj-ud-daula came to know of it. During Aliwardi Khan's illness, Siraj-ud-daula was also made increasingly conscious of the abuse the English were making of the imperial edict giving them a right of duty-free trade. This was Siraj-ud-daula's second complaint against the English. Holwell, a member of the Fort William government, admits that 'the continual abuse of the' duty-free permits by the Company's servants 'robbed' the state exchequer of 'legal customs on a considerable proportion of the trade of the provinces'. Holwell adds: 'And Surajud Dowla in 1756, declared he would prove from vouchers in his possession "that the English had defrauded the King in his revenues, by covering the trade of his subjects with their Dusticks, to the amount of one crore and a half (one million five hundred thousand pounds sterling) in the space of fifty years".'[13] Similar accounts are to be found in the narratives of some other Englishmen officially connected with the Company's affairs in Bengal.

Neither Orme, nor Dodwell, nor other noted historians considered it worth while or relevant to make a mention of the abuse of the imperial edict which caused considerable leakage in govern-

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[12] Dodwell, *The Cambridge History of India*, vol. V, p. 142.
[13] J. Z. Holwell, *Indian Tracts*, 1764, pp. 423, 428.

ment revenues, and whose incidence was increasing. When Siraj-ud-daula formally ascended the throne, he had three complaints against the English:

> One is that they have built strong fortifications and dug a large ditch in the King's dominions contrary to the established laws of the country; The second is that they have abused the privilege of their *dustucks* by granting them to such as were no ways entitled to them, from which practices the King has suffered greatly in the revenue of his Customs; The third is that they give protection to such of the King's subjects as have by their behaviour in the employs they were entrusted with made themselves liable to be called to an account and instead of giving them up on demand they allow such persons to shelter themselves within their bounds from the hands of justice.[14]

The gravity of the second complaint can be assessed from Holwell's following account:

> ... dustick was sold at various prices, from 200 to 25 rupees each; and to such a shameful prostitution did this trade in dusticks come to, that it was no uncommon thing to see on the register a trade of two *lack* per annum carried on in appearance by persons known never to have been worth five pounds, in their lives, nor that had credit to this amount in the Presidency.[15]

The third complaint referred particularly to harbouring by the English of one Krishna Das, who had moved into the English settlement of Calcutta with the concurrence of the Fort William authorities, while Aliwardi Khan lay on his death-bed. Krishna Das carried with him considerable amounts of money and jewellery; his stay at Calcutta had been arranged by his father, Raj Ballabh, who was evading settlement of arrears of revenue due to the Nawab, hoping that after the death of Aliwardi Khan, a revolution might deprive Siraj-ud-daula of the throne and put on it another claimant whom he was suspected of supporting. Raj Ballabh was imprisoned, 'or at any rate placed under strict surveillance' by Siraj-ud-daula. These were the circumstances on

[14] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 4 (Siraj-ud-daula's letter to Khwaja Wajid, dated 1 June 1756).
[15] Holwell, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

account of which great political significance was attached to the harbouring of Krishna Das by the English. Krishna Das secured his admission into Calcutta by bribing principal men of Fort William. We find this fact recorded in the Directors' letter dated 23 March 1759: 'We are informed from good authority, that two of our servants, of considerable rank, actually received from Kissendass upwards of fifty thousand rupees, for our protecting this person against Surajah Dowla.'[16] Without a knowledge of the above background, the following account in Orme's work, when read with his characterisation of Siraj-ud-daula already deposited in one's mind—that 'he lived in every kind of intemperance and dabauchery and more especially in drinking spirituous liquors to an excess, which inflamed his passions, and impaired the little understanding with which he was born'—is likely to make the young Nawab's attitude about the Krishna Das affair ludicrous and his insistence on the demand for the return of the fugitive as sheer madness:

> The admission of Kissendas into Calcutta was soon known at Muxadavad. It wounded the pride of Surajah Dowlah, and exasperated his mind with such suspicions, that he immediately went to Allaverdy, and told him that he was well informed the English intended to support the widow of Nowagis Mahomed (the other claimant).[17]

Siraj-ud-daula repeatedly asked the English to (1) demolish the additional fortification, (2) settle the question of illegal use of duty-free permits, and (3) return Krishna Das to him. He did not lose patience even when his messenger, whom the Fort William authorities knew to be a man of considerable importance, was disgracefully returned. Yet Dodwell discards the relevant material, and characterises Siraj-ud-daula's invasion of the English settlements as the performance of a madcap. Says Dodwell:

> Having been proclaimed as nawab at the capital, Murshidabad, he marched almost at once against his cousin, Shaukat Jang, the governor of Purnia, whom he suspected rightly of intriguing against him. On 20 May ... he suddenly changed his mind, ordered an immediate return to Murshidabad, and directed the English factory at Kasimbazar to be seized. This was carried

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 362. [17] Orme, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

> out on 4 June, three days after the Nawab's return to Murshidabad; and on the 5th his army began its march against Calcutta. On the 20th he captured the place. This extraordinary series of events took everyone by surpise.[18]

Dodwell reaches the conclusion that 'there is reason to think that fear of European aggression was the main predisposing cause of the attack'. There is inherent in this conclusion the suggestion that it was fear rather than any reasonable ground that provoked Siraj-ud-daula's attack. What is the head of a government to do when a powerful foreign party ignores him and disregards his demands contemptuously ? This question and the answer to it do not fit in with Dodwell's study of the history of Bengal.

Even Malleson, who can be creditably counted as one of those few who largely appear to be above partisanship, makes the mistake of following the common pattern in his account of Siraj-ud-daula's invasion. He says:

> Surrounded from his earliest youth by flatterers, he (Siraj-ud-daula) had been encouraged to imbibe a hatred towards the foreign settlers on the Coast. Their rising prosperity and their wealth, increased largely by rumour, excited, there can be no doubt, the cupidity of these brainless flatterers, and these, in their turn worked on the facile nature of the boy-ruler. The result was that Siraj-ud-daula determined to inaugurate his reign by the despoiling of the English settlers. Charging them with increasing their fortifications and with harbouring political offenders, he seized their factory at Kasimbazar, imprisoned the garrison, and plundered the property found there.[19]

(We have it on the authority of the chief of the Kasimbazar factory himself that, let alone plundering, the Nawab did not touch anything in the factory.) The eminent historian James Mill also misleads himself and others when he says that Siraj-ud-daula 'was greedy of riches, with which, in the imagination of the natives, Calcutta was filled'.[20] Dodwell also says, on the authority of a letter dated 16 December 1756, from Dr. William Forth, the Company's surgeon at the Kasimbazar factory to Roger Drake,

[18] Dodwell, *The Cambridge History of India, op. cit.*, p. 141.
[19] Colonel G. B. Malleson, *The Decisive Battles of India, from 1746 to 1849*, p. 43.
[20] James Mill, *The History of British India*, vol. III.

Governor of Fort William, that 'it was common talk at Murshidabad that the vast wealth of the English might easily be captured'. There is no such reference in the letter, as reproduced in full, in Hill's *Bengal in 1756-57*. On the contrary, Forth gives in that letter almost a chronological account of what preceded Siraj-ud-daula's invasion of the English factories. Forth says in his long letter:

> I went to Ghulam Shah, (an army officer of Siraj-ud-daula) and after the usual compliments I begged to know of him the reason of the Nabob's sending such numbers of forces. He told me that the Nabob was very angry that we were enlarging the ditch, building new works, particularly a drawbridge and small fortification beyond it by Chitpore, and that if they were demolished everything would be quiet again, and desired me to acquaint the Chief and tell him to write a letter to the Nabob directly.

Forth further says:

> I shall now inform your Honour what I heard afterwards.... The Nabob had wrote you and the French to desist from making any more work.... The answer you sent ... seemed to hint that you would go on notwithstanding his orders. Wither it is so or not, you must certainly be the best judge, and if I remember well it was this letter that put him into a passion when he made use of the expression that he would scourge the English out of his country.

About the Fort William authorities returning the Nawab's messenger, Narain Singh, with insults, Forth says:

> Aga Meer a favorite of the old Nabob's told him that Mr. Drake's letter to the Nabob and the detaining of Kissendass, the ill treatment Narain Sing had met with—several complaints being at the same time made of the disrespect to his orders and proud behaviour of the English in general—was originally the cause of all this unhappy affair. ... It seemed to be the general opinion that the keeping of Kissendass was the occasion of the Nabob's resentment.[21]

Forth also narrates how concern was expressed to him in a con-

[21] Hill, vol. II, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

versation between him and the old Nawab (two weeks before his death) and Siraj-ud-daula over the reports of English warships arriving in Bengal, and of the English emerging as a political power in the South. Dodwell dismisses all these accounts as of no relevance to his history.

Some of the contemporary accounts relating to the events leading to Siraj-ud-daula's capture of the English factories and Calcutta are conflicting. But they cannot confuse a writer searching for truth, though they can provide, as they have actually done, tendentious writers with what they can parade as 'documentary' evidence. Take for example, the Fort William Governor. After the English had been deprived of their factories and Calcutta, Drake was accused of haughtiness, misbehaviour, and imprudence, as the result of which unprecedented distress befell the English. He submits an explanation. But how can that explanation be regarded as an acceptable 'documentary' evidence? There is a lot of other evidences which is so convincing that much of Drake's explanation appears as an accused's afterthought. Letters which were written when the events were occurring should naturally be more dependable than the accounts prepared and explanations submitted after the events. For example, just before the Kasimbazar factory was to be attacked by the Nawab's force (it was the first to be attacked), Watts, Collet and Batson, the chief and the members of the council of that factory, despatched an urgent message to the Fort William Council (4 June 1756), in which they said:

> We have information by some people that the Nabob intends attacking us and from others that they only threaten us in order that your Honour &c. may the sooner comply with their demand in filling up the ditch and pulling down what works you have begun upon, in which he seems peremptory. We therefore desire your Honour &c. will either send us up a body of men that we may be able to defend ourselves or write to the Nabob that you will immediately comply with his demand.... If your Honour &c. will write an *arasdass* (written petition) to the Nabob that you will immediately obey his orders we are in hopes he will put an end to this troublesome affair.[22]

Drake himself admits in his explanation that the Nawab had

[22] Hill, vol. I, pp. 8-9.

demanded of him, as far back as April 1756, that the English 'should not only desist from carrying on any new works but demolish our redoubt and drawbridge at Perrin's and fill up the ditch dug round the town'.[23] Even if a sympathetic writer puts faith in Drake's assertion that he sent conciliatory letters to the Nawab—they are not to be found in the records, while all other papers are available—he cannot afford to ignore the fact that (1) new works were constructed, and (2) the Fort Willian Council did not demolish them even after the receipt of the Kasimbazar council's above-quoted letter. Again, after the Kasimbazar factory had been seized, the Nawab, Watts informs us, repeated his demands:

> The Nabob ... insisted on his (Watts) giving an obligation that in 15 days time the gentlemen of Caluctta should level what new works they had raised, deliver up the Nabob's tenants who had fled for protection there, and that if it could be proved we had falsified the Company's *dustucks* by giving them to those that had no right to them, we should pay back what the Government had suffered by loss of Duties.[24]

Once again, Watts, while the Nawab was at some distance from Calcutta on his march and the Kassimbazar chief was his prisoner, managed to send a letter to Fort William, repeating his request to accommodate the Nawab's demand. In this letter, Watts says he is 'well informed an answer was wrote, importing that after the disgrace the Company had suffered at Cossimbuzar by the taking of their factory and imprisoning their servants, they were resolved not to come to any agreement'.[25] So sure were the Fort William authorities of repulsing the Nawab's attack that the new works were not demolished, that Krishna Das was not returned, that no promise was made to settle the question of illegal use of duty-free permits, in spite of repeated demands, should be regarded as a conclusive evidence ; they stand out as undeniable facts, and are enough to warrant repudiation of the accused's story.

Similarly the accounts of such other contemporary chroniclers as were not fully acquainted with the antecedents of Siraj-ud-daula's attack or knowing them suppressed the truth, will have to be rejected. One such account is by Henry Vansittart. Vansittart succeeded Clive as Governor of Fort William in 1760; but at the time of the developments of 1756 and till the summer of

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 124. [24] *Ibid.*, p. 101. [25] *Ibid.*, pp. 103-4.

1760, he was in Madras. His *Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal* (three volumes) is, to a large extent, a dependable source material regarding what happened in Bengal during his term of office. He felt that he was called upon to present an account of his time and rapidly surveyed earlier happenings only with a view to giving a connected story. It is in the earlier account that he goes wrong. He says:

> In the year 1756, came a Nabob, who was not to be satisfied by levying a sum of money like his predecessors. Serajah Dowla, succeeding his grandfather, promised himself a vast treasure at once from the plunder of the town of Calcutta; and so, upon pretence of our building new fortifications, or in resentment of our protection given to a subject of the government (for both these reasons were urged) he attacked, and took all the Company's Settlements in Bengal, and thus the country government, by an extravagant and cruel abuse of their power over us, opened the way for the destruction of that power, and for our future security.[26]

The reason why Vansittart felt called upon to write out a voluminous account—about a thousand pages—was that an impression was prevailing in England that the Company's servants were, by mischievous designs, unmaking and making princes, and creating disturbance in the political life of India. Vansittart himself explains the reason thus: 'Endeavours have been used to represent the government of the Nabobs in India as a sacred and fixed inheritance with a design to throw an odium upon this change in Bengal, by making it appear as a violation of the rights of princes, and offence against the constitutional laws of the empire.'[27] Vansittart himself deposed Mir Jafar by quietly surrounding at night his palace while he was sleeping and was in a state of helplessness.

From the samples quoted above, it is evident that there is ample 'source material' for a tendentious writer to produce a history which can pass as a work of laborious research. Many such works were produced in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and they now serve as reference books.

We come across a graver misrepresentation and more mischievous

[26] Henry Vansittart, *A Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal,* vol. I, p. 17.
[27] *Ibid.,* Introduction, p. ii.

suppression of facts about the second conflict between Siraj-ud-daula and the English in January-February 1757. Dodwell says that 'a night attack', (by Clive on the Nawab's forces), 'though far from a complete success, so disquieted him that he retired and sent offers of terms'.[28] The reference is to the battle of 5 February 1757, between the English force and the Nawab's army. Dodwell and other writers assume it to be the decisive battle defeating the Nawab and establishing superiority of British arms. They have told half the story, ignoring the other half which did not suit them. We shall tell it in Clive's own words, for there can be no better authority than he. Says Clive, in his letter dated 22 February 1757, to 'the Hon'ble Secret Committee for Affairs of the Hon'ble United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies':

> About 6 we entered the Enemies' Camp in a thick Fog and crossed it in about two hours with considerable execution. Had the Fog cleared up as it usually does about 8 O'clock when we were entire Master of the Camps without the Ditch, the action must have been decisive; instead of which it thickened and occasioned our mistaking the way.
>
> Just at this time he (the Nawab) had received advice that the Afghans had defeated the Mogul, and their leader had seized the Government assuming the title of Ahmud Shaw Shahawn Shah: orders were immediately issued for coins for this province to be struck in the name of the new Emperor, and the Nabob it is supposed is hurrying to his Frontiers to make an alliance with his neighbour the Nabob of Lucknapore, sometimes called Owd, for their mutual support in the present disturb'd state of the Empire.[29]

Thus the battle of 5 February was not decisive, and what the commander of that battle, Clive, himself says is that he believed it 'must have been decisive' if the fog had not 'thickened'. And the Nawab 'retired' not because of the fear of defeat at the hands of the English, but in order to ward off a danger which might threaten his very existence. Instead of continuing the action with a view to turning the English again out of Bengal, he considered it expedient to make friends with them in order that they might be utilised as his allies in meeting the threat from the north. He offered them liberal terms, concluded a treaty with them, and

[28] Dodwell, *Cambridge History, op. cit.*, p. 145.
[29] *Bengal & Madras Papers,* vol. II.

sought their help. We have the following account about it from Clive:

> I have already acquainted you of the revolution which has happened at Dilly, since which the Nabab writes me, he has received advices that the Afghans are marching towards his provinces. He has desired me in the strongest terms to join him, and has affored to pay a Lack of Rupees per month for the maintenance of the forces. The Gentlemen here as well as myself are of opinion the offers are too advantagious to be refused, indeed our late Treaty binds us to assist him, and I need not represent that if these plunderers get into the province, there will be an end to the Company's affairs for some time, part of the Nabab's Army are already marched for Patna, and he himself will leave Muxadabad very soon with the rest.[30]

The surprise attack by the English on the Nawab's camp in the morning on 5 February was intended to strike terror, and there were some among the English themselves who considered it too hazardous and too adventurous. The Nawab's army 'consisted of 20,000 Horse and 30,000 foot with 25 pieces of Cannon'.[31] The English force consisted of 'between 5 and 6 hundred Seamen ... 500 European Rank and File, 800 Seapoys, Six Field Pieces and a Howitzer with 70 of the Train'.[32] The reverse the Nawab's men received from the surprise attack was like the one which they received before the eventual annihilation of the English resistance by the Nawab in June 1756.

In spite of the unworthy ways Clive employed to stage Plassey, he was, for the British people, one of their empire builders, and as such was a hero of history. But in the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the current century, British writers endeavoured to make a greater hero of him. The account of the siege of Arcot is so artfully scissored by them that Clive emerges almost as a miracle, a legendary figure of mythology. They not only gloss over his immoral deeds, but, like Dodwell, regret that at the Parliamentary inquiry of 1772—where his conduct was peeped into—he should have been 'questioned like a sheep-stealer'. They excuse him by asserting that the standards of

[30] *Ibid.*, Clive's letter dated 11 March 1757, to George Pigot, President of Fort St. George.
[31] *Ibid., Journal of Military Transactions in the Expedition to Hughly.*
[32] *Ibid.*

morality of the eighteenth century cannot be judged from the standards of the nineteenth or twentieth century, conveniently forgetting that it was in the eighteenth century itself that his conduct was contemptuously criticised in England. It was in the eighteenth century itself that the Court of Directors severely rebuked their principal servants in Bengal for making huge private gains by playing one aspirant for the Nawabship against another.

About the so-called Battle of Plassey, from which the English emerged as a political power and Mir Jafar as the new Nawab of Bengal, about Mir Jafar's deposition, and about war with his successor, Mir Kasim, we find in the works of recognised historians a highly coloured account. Dodwell is ahead of others inasmuch as he introduces the mischievous Hindu-Muslim question as if to give his work a twentieth-century touch. In justifying the removal of Mir Jafar, he says : 'At the same time as he was quarrelling with the English, the Nawab resolved to strengthen his government by getting rid of the principal Hindu officials; and this policy led to a prolonged duel between him and Clive for their removal or retention.'[33] Dodwell pointedly refers[34] to Rai Durlabh Ram, Mir Jafar's chief minister, who was a co-conspirator with Mir Jafar, and who, having won greater confidence of the English, was proposed by them to be appointed to the principal post in the government. This is not the proper place to discuss what led to the removal of Durlabh Ram, and it is enough to say here that the man appointed by Mir Jafar to succeed him (Durlabh Ram) was not a non-Hindu, but another Hindu, named Raj Ballabh, who enjoyed the confidence of the English as well. At no place in the contemporary records is the removal of Durlabh Ram mentioned as the removal of a Hindu. It is Dodwell's own brain-wave.

'The Nawab had been guilty,' Dodwell goes on to say, 'of conspiring against the English with the Dutch; he was not unreasonably suspected of conspiring against them with the Shahzada.'[35] And these two causes, according to Dodwell, were enough justification for the English to plot his removal. While Vansittart, then Governor of Fort William, only strongly doubted that Mir Jafar had been conspiring against the English, Dodwell says it with absolute certainty. In the second cause also, Dodwell is similarly exaggera-

[33] Dodwell, *Dupleix and Clive,* p. 139.
[34] Dodwell, *The Cambridge History of India, op. cit.,* p. 153.
[35] Dodwell, *Dupleix and Clive,* p. 196.

tive. He bases his judgement upon Holwell's following assertion (in a letter to Caillaud) regarding Mir Jafar's correspondence with the Mughal Prince Ali Gauhar (later known as Shah Alam II), who was about to invade Bihar: 'The carrying on this concealed correspondence with the Prince, I cannot look on in any other light than as the highest infringement of that respect and deference due to your station and the treaty subsisting between us.'[36] (Rarely can Holwell be quoted as an authority. Dodwell himself subscribes to this view, though with a reservation: about 'Holwell's general veracity the present writer has as poor an opinion as anyone; but even he at times approximated to the truth; we cannot deny an assertion merely because he made it.'[37]) But Holwell's account so aptly fits in with Dodwell's own method that the latter does not apply his own sense of reasoning; the English were also carrying on correspondence with the prince, and if they could do so, why could not the ruler of Bengal? Then, there was no conspiracy hatched in Mir Jafar's correspondence. But it is not by this tampering with facts alone that Dodwell does wrong to history; he skips over the main cause, in fact the only cause, which brought down Mir Jafar. We have the authority of the then Fort William Governor himself (Vansittart) to say that he demanded of Mir Jafar to agree to transfer the *diwani* of three districts of Bengal to the Company, and also to appoint Mir Kasim (with whom the Fort William Council had already entered into a secret treaty) as deputy Nawab. The demand was aggressively put forward one night when, without the knowledge of the Nawab, his palace was surrounded by a contingent of English force. At first he thought of resistance, but a stroke of practical wisdom checked him, and he surrendered, abandoning the Nawabship in favour of Mir Kasim. Big sums of money which the makers of this revolution, the leading men of the Company in Bengal, received from Mir Kasim in discharge of a secret settlement with him, caused the Court of Directors great amazement and annoyance, and they sent out strict orders against the acceptance of what the accused called 'voluntary gifts'.

Dodwell excels his perversions regarding Siraj-ud-daula and Mir Jafar, when he tells his story justifying the treatment the English meted out to Mir Kasim. He argues his case so cleverly that the impression left on the reader's mind will be one of innocence and legitimate behaviour of the English in Bengal, and of guilt and misconduct on the part of Mir Kasim. The trouble with Mir

[36] *Ibid.* [37] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

Kasim arose mainly from the English merchants refusing to pay duty on inland trade, and enforcing their defiance of state laws by violence, and punishment of officers of the government. We have the authority of the then governor, Vansittart, himself to exonerate Mir Kasim:

> No one instance can be produced of his (Mir Kasim) sending a man into any of the lands ceded to us, or molesting us in a single article of our commerce, till the contention which he was drawn into by the usurpation of our gomastahs, and our new claims with respect to our private trade; and even to the breaking out of the war, during the height of our disputes, the Company's business, in every part, went on without the least interruption, excepting one or two aggravated complaints of Mr. Ellis's concerning the salt-petre business. How different was the conduct of the gentlemen [Englishmen], who had formed themselves into a party against him! From the time of his advancement to the subahship, scarce a day passed, but occasion was taken from the most trifling pretences, to trample upon his government, to seize his officers, and to insult them with personal threats and invectives.... Yet for a long time he submitted to all his grievances, contenting himself with remonstrating against them.... That we were the first aggressors, by the assault of the city of Patna will not be disputed.[38]

Vansittart repeatedly told his council that the English were exceeding their rights in refusing to pay the state duty, and he did so on the authority of the imperial *farman* granting the English exemption of duty on foreign trade, and also on the authority of the Court of Directors' orders. The Directors had sternly told the Bengal Council several times that they should not transcend the terms of the *farman* ; on the present occasion they gave the same verdict:

> One great Source of the Disputes, Misunderstandings, and Difficulties, which have occurred with the Country Government, appears evidently to have taken its Rise from the unwarrantable and licentious Manner of carrying on the private Trade by the Company's Servants, their Gomastahs, Agents, and others, to the Prejudice of the Subah; both with respect to his Authority and the Revenues justly due to him. The diverting and taking

[38] Vansittart. *A Narrative of Transaction in Bengal,* vol. II, p. 382-7.

from his natural Subjects the Trade in the Inland Parts of the Country, to which neither we, nor any persons whatever, dependant upon us, or under our Protection, have any Manner of Rights.[39]

Summing up the condition of affairs of those few years, the Directors say:

The English in Bengal for these last four years ... have been guilty of violating treaties, of great oppression and a Combination to enrich themselves. We do not here mean to enter into a Discussion, respecting the political Conduct of our late Governor and Council; but must say, that an unbounded Thirst after Riches seems to have possessed the whole Body of our Servants to that Degree, that they have lost all Sight of Justice to the Country Government, and of their Duty to the Company.[40]

The vast Fortunes acquired in the Inland Trade have been obtained by a Scene of the most tyrannic and oppressive Conduct, that ever was known in any Age or Country.[41]

Dodwell does not find these letters of the Court of Directors of any value to his history. He not only completely ignores them, but invokes for his purpose some instructions issued by Mir Jafar, and puts on them an interpretation which they cannot bear. As if his perverted interpretation was not enough, he goes on to assert: 'Many of the council were deeply suspicious of Mir Kasim, who had recently entered into relations of an unknown character with the Nawab of Oudh.'[42] We have it from the Company's own records that contrary is the fact: relations between Mir Kasim and the Nawab of Oudh were inimical, and when Mir Kasim, defeated by the English and Mir Jafar's army, escaped, with his wealth and men, into Oudh, the diplomatic friendship was used by the Nawab of Oudh to rob Mir Kasim of his treasure.

These introductory pages might be regarded as giving a foretaste of the book I am presenting ; but the instances I have chosen for illustration, though outstanding in importance, are not the only ones which called for correction in the history of the occupation of Bengal by the British. If the many questionable passages from

[39] *Bengal & Madras Papers*, vol. III.
[40] Letter dated 26 April 1765 to the Fort William Council.
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] Letter dated 17 May 1766, to the same.

tendentious books were quoted and answered, and if the manner and tenor of different accounts were examined with a view to correcting them, they would fill a big volume. That certainly is not my aim, and if grave errors in others' works have been pointed out in the Introduction, it is to urge the necessity that history of the British period must be re-written, and if Dodwell has been chosen for illustration, it is because his contributions relating to the particular period (dealt within the present book) in *The Cambridge History of India*, pass as an authoritative account and are vastly read by students and others in India, and perhaps in Britain and other English-speaking countries also. The twentieth century is not what the eighteenth or the nineteenth century was, and so far as India and Britain are concerned, the present is wholly different from the first forty-seven years of the current century. Therefore, even the British people and their children at colleges and universities would, it is to be hoped, like to know the truth, rather than a version which prejudicially presented a one-sided picture.

Re-writing of the British period requires a great deal of labour spread over a number of years, and must engage dozens of scholars. The present work is a humble contribution; its scope is limited, and even on the period it deals with, it cannot be claimed as the last word. It can, however, be claimed that all essential constituents to the story told herein have been included, and the contents are based on the evidence of unimpeachable source material. I have preferred the records of the East India Company and letters and memoirs of its servants in Bengal, to the accounts of contemporary or later Indian historians. Firstly, because they are precise, and secondly, because the English records should be considered as the best authority to correct the narratives of English historians. Where different accounts of an incident are conflicting, I have usually preferred those of detached persons to those whose writers were themselves involved in it. Where there was no such conflict, I have put up the characters to tell their own story. Let me give an illustration of the time of Mir Kasim. On the question of inland trade, a majority of the members of the Fort William Council decided, outvoting the minority which included Governor Vansittart, to deal in inland trade, and to do so without payment of any duty. The Court of Directors' earlier orders and also those that came after the end of Mir Kasim's rule were unambiguous that the minority was right. I have, therefore, unlike Dodwell, preferred Vansittart and

the Court of Directors for my authority, and not the majority. In my accounts of treachery, bribery, forgery, disloyalty, oppression, loot, cheating, etc., I have, with few exceptions, depended on the English records.

I have regarded documents like *Calendar of Persian Correspondence* as a part of English records, because they were found among those records, and were translated or summarised by British rulers of later period. Early in the current century, the Record Departments of the then Government of India did a commendable job and facilitated the work of the future research scholars by compiling and printing the heap of relevant records they found stacked in their shelves. *Bengal & Madras Papers*, in three volumes of about 2,000 pages of foolscap size and S. C. Hill's *Indian Records Series: Bengal in 1756-1757*, in three volumes of about 1,200 pages give the researcher bulk of the material he would need for a work like the present one. A thousand pages of Vansittart's *Narrative* can enable him, though not adequately, to carry the story up to the second government of Mir Jafar. Then, there are, to facilitate his task further, the voluminous reports of the Parliamentary inquiry committee of 1772. There are dozens of other contemporary accounts and records, all printed, like Scrafton's *Reflections*, Howell's *Indian Tracts*, Watts' *Memoires of the Revolution*, George Bubb's *Indian Records*, Aitchison's *Collection of Treaties*, etc. All these, no doubt, do not provide all the material one must require for a hitsory of the period I have dealt with, and one must look elsewhere for additional material as I have done but one has got to acknowledge the tremendous labour that has gone into compiling these volumes without which corrections in old works of history would have been impossible, or possible with many years of labour.

CHAPTER ONE

Early English Exploits in Bengal

IF THE ENGLISH servants of the East India Company had carried out the orders of its Court of Directors honestly and scrupulously, there would have been no British Empire in India. The Bengal events of 1756-65 tell a fascinating story of how blunders turned out to be the foundation stones of the empire. If the Company's executive in Bengal did not contravene the Directors' instructions about fortification of Fort William, and if Drake, the then Governor of the English settlement, did not commit a grave error, as it was regarded by the leading men of the Company, in arrogantly provoking the Bengal Nawab, Siraj-ud-daula, there would have been no invasion of Calcutta, and no Plassey. If the English merchants in Bengal had obeyed in letter and spirit the Court of Directors' orders forbidding them from dealing in inland trade, and from indulging in fraudulent use of the custom-free concession, both of which practices violated the terms of the Mughal *farman* granted to the Company, there would have been no quarrels with the Nawabs, no war with Mir Kasim, and no occasion for the events which ultimately led to the granting of the *Diwani* of Bengal to the Company by the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam. If there were no bribing, no forgery, no cheating, no avarice, on the part of the Company's servants—again to the consternation of the Directors—there would have been no 'revolution', making every new Nawab ever more subservient to the English, and laying, brick by brick, the foundation of British Empire.

The province of Bengal, which then comprised Bengal proper, Bihar and Orissa, was the first in India to pass under the political power of the English. So prosperous was it that it was known as the Paradise of India. It was in 1634 that the East India Company obtained permission from the Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan, to establish factories in Bengal, with a fort at Pipli (in the district of Midnapur). The English applied for this permission at the most appropriate time. A year earlier, the emperor had decided to turn out the Portuguese from his realm, on becoming

convinced that the reverses his troops had suffered in the South at the hands of Adil Khan of Bijapur, were the result of the assistance the enemy received from them. The reports from Bengal also said that the Portuguese had created a reign of terror round about Hugli. They exacted heavy duties from the Indian traders, captured orphan children of Hindus and Muslims and converted them to Christianity, and intensified their trade in slaves. (The Mughals 'always looked upon the slavery of subjects with horror, whatever might be their race or religion'.[1]) A Mughal force was sent to carry out the emperor's decision; the Portuguese settlement containing 200 Portuguese and 600 slaves, was overwhelmed and compelled to surrender, after a tough resistance, in which many of them were killed. For a long time the Portuguese had enjoyed a position of privilege in the foreign trade of the country; their day was done, and the trade supremacy now began to pass into the hands of the English. In 1640, Shah Jahan allowed the English Company to trade custom-free; the English dealt mainly in foreign trade, and this concession was not likely to injure the interests of Indian traders. But the concession was often abused and extended to the inland trade to the detriment of Indian traders and imperial revenues.

Towards the close of the fifties India witnessed a great political upheaval, not unusual in its history, which also threatened to deprive the English of the privilege bestowed upon them by Shah Jahan and generously allowed to be enjoyed by his son, Shuja, as Viceroy of Bengal. Emperor Shah Jahan was thrown into prison by his son, Aurangzeb, who proclaimed himself emperor. In Bengal, a new viceroy, Mir Jumla, had taken over. Mir Jumla objected to the privilege which discriminated against other traders, including the Indian, but, according to British sources, was silenced by the English by means of bribes. But in 1680, when Aurangzeb's attention was drawn to the discriminatory privilege, he cancelled it, and ordered that the English should be required to pay the usual custom of 2 per cent on their goods and the *jazia* or poll-money of $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. It was no small shock to the English establishment in Bengal, which, out of its enormous profits, defrayed the cost of the Company's fortifications at Madras and Bombay. The imperial order did not stop there; it also forbade supply of saltpetre to the Company—an article which was one of the principal articles of export and with which gun-powder was prepared in England. Aurangzeb contended that he would not allow the export

[1] Henry Torrens, *Empire in Asia—A Book of Confessions*, p. 19.

of an article which was being used by Europeans in their wars against Muslim powers, with whom he wanted to maintain friendly relations.

The governing council of the Company's affairs in Bengal were excited as if a challenge had come from one king to another. They entertained hope of regaining the old rights and privileges by means of an armed action. They informed their bosses in England that India was in the grip of a political confusion, and that the Company had a unique opportunity of rising to the position of a political power. Men like Tavernier believed that 'one hundred of our European soldiers would scarcely have any difficulty in vanquishing 1,000 of these Indian soldiers.[2] Sir Josiah Child was then Governor of the Company and chairman of the Court of Directors. He 'exercised over the Directors an influence amounting to despotic power', and prevailed upon them 'to assume the offensive in war, whenever opportunity should offer'. And 'the Court pompously announced that they were determined to levy war, not only on the Nawab of Bengal, but in the sequel on the Emperor himself'.[3] In order that his plan should be carried into effect vigorously, Josiah Child appointed his own brother, John Child, president for the affairs of the East and Governor of Bombay. He also managed to associate the King of England with the projected invasion by obtaining from him the services of one of the Marquis of Worcester's companies, under the command of Captain Clifton.

Eventually, with the permission of the king, Josiah Child 'fitted out the largest armament which had ever been despatched from England to the East. Admiral Nicholson was sent out with 12 ships of war, carrying 200 pieces of canon, and a body of 600 men, to be reinforced by 400 from Madras'.[4] The admiral was instructed to commence his operations with the seizure of the fortification of Chittagong, 'for which purpose 200 additional guns were placed on board',[5] and then, by entering into a treaty with the Raja of Arracan, and by conciliating local landlords, to move on to Dacca, which was at that time the residence of the Mughal Viceroy of Bengal. After the viceroy had been overwhelmed, the admiral was to compel him to cede the town and territory of Chittagong to the Company, and also to grant

[2] V. Ball, *Travels in India by Jean-Baptista Tavernier,* vol. I, Oxford University Press, 1925, p. 391.
[3] Philip Anderson, *The English in Western India,* 1854, p. 237.
[4] J. C. Marshman, *The History of India,* vol. I, p. 211.
[5] *Ibid.*

'many other privileges and immunities' throughout his province. In October 1686, the projected offensive began and by May 1687, it was thoroughly crushed by the Mughal forces stationed in Bengal. A year later, the English renewed the offensive only to be beaten again.

John Child had come to conquer India, and was waiting for a favourable opportunity to start his offensive on the West Coast, when the news of the first rupture in Bengal reached him. He did not lose heart and went ahead with his plan which was to make Bombay the rendezvous of his offensive and to evacuate the English factors from Surat, where, when hostilities would have started, they might have been molested by the Mughals. But the Mughals stole a march over the English and threw the English factors into confinement. John Child, who had already made Bombay his headquarters, began his hostilities with the seizure of as many of the Mughal ships as were within his reach. Child was repeatedly asked by the Mughal authorities to desist from warlike operations, and when, during the negotiations, the English captured more of the Mughal ships, the emperor sent orders to his Sidi Admiral to attack Bombay with all the troops he could collect. The admiral overwhelmed the English rendezvous with 8,000 men (in February 1689), drove the English into their fort, and captured the island. Many Europeans 'deserted in numbers' to the camp of the Mughal Admiral.

John Child, now a disillusioned man, 'discovered that nothing short of abject submission could appease the emperor. He tried the effect of bribery upon the Imperial officers, and endeavouring to atone for his past insolence by submitting to the meanest degradation, he despatched two envoys to Court.'[6] The emperor 'sternly reprimanded the envoys, but being fully aware how important it was for the welfare of his Empire that the English trade should be retained ... he listened to the entreaties of the Company's agents, and consented to an accommodation, on condition that all moneys due from them to his subjects should be paid, that recompense should be made for such losses as the Moguls had sustained, and that the hateful Sir John Child should leave India before the expiration of nine months'.[7] (Before the Company launched the offensive, it owed £281,250 to the Indian merchants of Surat alone. As for the Mughal gains through the Company, the state treasury received every year about ten million rupees in the account of export trade.)

[6] Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 247. [7] *Ibid.*

'The unfulfilled ambition cost the Company very dearly. In December 1687, the Court of Directors had expressed a wish in a communication they had sent to their chief at Madras, 'to establish such a politic of civil and military power, and create and secure such a large revenue to secure both ... as may be the foundation of a large, and well-grounded, secure English dominion in India for all times to come'. And in the summer of 1689, after the wish had been disgracefully frustrated, what the Company got was a new *farman* which placed severe restrictions on the English.

Thus ended the Court of Directors' adventure. The dream of an empire never occurred to them again, and they left such a mortifying experience to their successors in office that when, about seven decades later, the empire was actually knocking at their doors, they were restraining their ambitious servants.

It was the powerful central authority which kept the empire together and was capable of humbling the adventurers. Aurangzeb regarded the incident of English hostilities a petty affair and never believed that the Company could ever constitute a threat to the empire. In early nineties' when it was reported to the emperor that the English were fortifying[8] the villages they had newly acquired from the king of Tanjore, he said: 'Possibly my Indian subjects quarrelled with the English. Why should not these foreigners, come here from distant lands, arrange for their defence. I will not interfere.' He never realised that the empire over which he presided might fall to pieces after his death and that the English whom he considered insignificant would grab it bit by bit. He even restored their trade concession.

Aurangzeb died in 1707 and was succeeded by Bahadur Shah. At the time of his death, Murshid Kuli Khan, also known as Jafar Khan, was Viceroy of Bengal. He was appointed to the viceroyalty in 1705, and after a few years of experience, he realised that the Company's trade must be regulated anew so as to put it completely at par with others. The time when this intention entered the mind of Murshid Kuli Khan happened to coincide with the beginning of those cruel developments which eventually extinguished the Mughal rule for good. On the death of Bahadur Shah (also known as Shah Alam I) in 1712, his sons referred the question of succession to arms, which gave the throne to the eldest son, Jahandar Shah, who proclaimed himself emperor in the month of March that year. One of the brothers, killed in the battles, was

[8] The reference is to Fort St. David.

Azim-ush-shan. In 1696, Azim-ush-shan had been sent by Aurangzeb to Bengal to put down the rebellion by some local chiefs, and, after he had discharged the task entrusted to him successfully, he was commissioned to superintend the three governments of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. 'In the last year of his reign, Alamgir (Aurangzeb) recalled his grandson, Azim-ush-shan, from Bengal, giving him orders to leave his eldest son, Muhammad Karim, in charge of Bihar, and his second son, Farrukh-siyar, in Bengal.' Even when Bahadur Shah was not yet dead, Azim-ush-shan, anticipating a struggle for the throne, had called on Farrukh-siyar to return to court. It was on his march, in the neighbourhood of Patna, that Farrukh-siyar heard of the death of Bahadur Shah, and 'without waiting for further information, he proclaimed his father's accession and caused coins to be stamped and the public prayer or *khutba* to be read in his name'.[9] He heard of his father's defeat and death on 6 April 1712, and now he proclaimed his own succession to the empire, issuing coins in his name. That is, by his own proclamation, and not by that of the Mughal Emperor—Jahandar Shah had already seated himself on the throne—he became ruler, in his father's place, of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa.

This confusion caused to the English Company, in their own sphere, no small amount of worry. On 22 April, the Company's authorities at Calcutta received a communication from their men at Patna, saying they were 'in fear' and that Farrukh-siyar 'who is acknowledged as king at Patna will force them to visit him with a Piscash, and that they are informed that some of his officers have acquainted him that by said pretence he might get four or five lack of rupees out of them and the Dutch'.[10]

They also feared that if and when, the new emperor, Jahandar Shah's son, A'zz-ud-din, came with an army against the pretender Farrukh-siyar with a view to dislodging him, there would be plundering, and they might be 'obliged' to leave Patna.[11] In the political hierarchy at Patna, there were two groups, one favouring Farrukh-siyar and the other hostile to him. Murshid Kuli Khan, between whom and Azim-ush-shan, great jealousy had existed from the very first appointment of the latter to Bengal, refused to recognise Farrukh-siyar.[12] Farrukh-siyar, therefore, sent, according to the news received by the English at Calcutta, one Nawab

[9] William Irvine, I.C.S., *Later Mughals*, vol. I, p. 198.
[10] C. R. Wilson (of the Bengal Education Service), *The Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, 1900, p. 49.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] Irvine, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

Husain Khan, 'to fetch' Murshid Kuli Khan 'and his treasure or his head'.[13] The errand failed to produce the desired result, and Farrukh-siyar, bent upon forcing his will, despatched an army, which was defeated by the forces of the Bengal Nawab.[14] Simultaneously, believing that the Nawab would be subdued, Farrukh-siyar had sent out orders to the English asking them not to give protection to the Nawab in the event of his seeking it from them. He had also asked them to 'seize' the Nawab and 'his treasure'.[15] Being uncertain of the future—not knowing with whom they would have to deal—the English authorities were faced with a dilemma as to what answer they should give to Farrukh-siyar's orders. An answer had got to be sent, for it had been asked to be sent 'with all expedition'.[16] Afraid lest their reply should fall in the hands of the Nawab, they authorised their men at Patna 'to draw up an answer there ... acknowledging the honour of having received' orders 'and to assure him' they would 'obey his commands relating to the stopping of any of his enemies that shall fly, as far as 'tis in our power'.[17] They also decided for their own guidance:

> Tho' 'tis not our business to meddle in any contending partys in Government, yet considering so much of our Hon'ble Masters estate being at Patna, towards the preservation of which we think it necessary to give the Civill answer, as specified above, tho' at the same time, we are resolved to be so cautious as not to act as shall be an after prejudice to us.[18]

Farrukh-siyar was on his march towards the imperial capital, and hoped that with the army he had raised and by turning intriguers in his favour, he would be able to displace Jahandar Shah. He needed money, and employed all the prevalent devices of exactions; the English at Patna had also 'to bribe the Government'.[19]

The result of Farrukh-siyar's adventure was in the womb of the future; for the present the fact was that Jahandar Shah was on the imperial throne, and Murshid Kuli Khan was the Nawab of Bengal. The English had to deal with these two about their trade. At this time of political uncertainty, they entertained the belief, and wisely enough, that if Jahandar Shah's court could be prevailed upon to grant them afresh the privilege of custom-free trade,

[13] Wilson, *Ibid.*, p. 50. [14] *Ibid.*, p. 56. [15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.* [17] *Ibid.*, p. 58. [18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

the Bengal Nawab would not interfere. The thought was at once given proper form. The first thing the English authorities in Bengal did was to write a 'congratulatory letter in Persian' to Jahandar Shah, containing 'the usuall complements and as full as the Persian tongue affords'.[20] The decision to write the letter was taken on 4 July 1712. At the same time a letter was written to the emperor's chief minister, Zulfiqar Khan, 'desiring him to present' their letter to the emperor, 'and move in our behalf for his Royall favour'. The letter to the chief minister also said that a present was ready for the emperor, and that the emperor should be acquainted with this fact.[21] This was followed by formal petition for trade concessions; again a separate petition was addressed to the chief minister. The petition to the emperor said:

> God. The Supplication of John Russell who is as the Minutest Grain of Sand, and whose forehead is the Tip of his footstool, who is Absolute Monarch and Prop of the Universe, whose Throne may be Compared to that of Solomons, and whose Renown is Equall to that of Cyrus, the Conqueror of the world: the Hereditary Support of Justice, Eradicating Oppression. We Englishmen having Traded hitherto in Bengall, Orixa [Orissa] and Beharr Custom free (Except in Surrat), are Your Majesties most obedient Slaves, always Intent upon Your Commands. We have Readily observed Your most Sacred Orders, and have found favour, we have as becomes Your Servants a dilligent Regard to Your Part of the Sea; The Present designed your Majestie from the Company is at Callcutta near Hughly. We hope to Send it after the Rains, and likewise to procure a Phyrmaund for Free Trade, We Crave Your Majestie's Protection to trade in the above mentioned places as before, and follow our business without Molestation.[22]

These supplications proved abortive, for before they could produce any result, Farrukh-siyar seized the throne from Jahandar Shah and declared himself emperor in January 1713. The Company now decided to write to the new emperor, as also to the following four persons, 'whose interest if we make them our friends will facilitate our getting the Kings Phirmaund': (1) Abdullah Khan, Vazir (minister); (2) Husain Ali Khan, *Bakhshi* (paymaster); (3) Raja Chhabela Ram, *faujdar* (administrator) of Karra Manikpur, who went over to Farrukh-siyar in November

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 63. [21] *Ibid.*, p. 65. [22] *Ibid.*

1712, leaving his former master Azz-ud-din; (4) Afrasyab Khan, who had been Farrukh-siyar's instructor in wrestling and archery.[23] This decision was taken in February, but in March 1713, news came to Calcutta that another struggle was in the offing and that the new monarch was not 'secure on the throne'.[24] The letters were delayed. Farrukh-siyar, however, stabilised his position and continued on the throne; and on March 27, the English addressed to him a fresh petition. Murshid Kuli Khan, the Nawab of Bengal was talked ill of in this petition, perhaps with the intention of refreshing Farrukh-siyar's memory about the episodes in which he was stubbornly defied by the former. The English authorities of Calcutta had had good relations with Farrukh-siyar when he held charge of Bengal. It was he, who had, in consideration of heavy presents offered to him (in September 1698) by the Company, through their agents Walsh and Khoja Sarhad, ordered the landlords of the three towns of 'Deculcutta, Chuttanuttee and Govindpore' to transfer their titles and rights to the Company for a sum of one thousand rupees. An idea of the heavy amounts of the presents can be had from the Court of Directors' letter in which they said:

> Your present to the prince was very considerable and made a hole in our cash, but since you were necessitated thereunto you did well to take that advantage for getting his Grant of the two towns of Chuttanuttee and Gobindpore as well as Calcutta at annual rent of one thousand two hundred Rupees.[25]

The Company's men in Bengal regarded the transaction as 'the best money that ever was spent for so great a privilege'. Three towns for a thousand or twelve hundred rupees! The landlords concerned made a 'great noise being unwilling to part with their country threatening to complain to the King of the injustice of the prince in giving away their country which they held so long in possession'.[26] The Company made a little increase in the amount fixed by Farrukh-siyar, but it was not this which silenced them. They realised their helplessness and surrendered their estates.

The petition the English addressed to Farrukh-siyar for a new trade *farman* said:

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 107. [24] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
[25] C. R. Wilson, *Indian Records Series, Old Fort William in Bengal*, vol. I. p.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

The request of the smallest particle of sand, John Russel, President for the English East India Company (with his reverence due from a slave amongst those that make their request to your Throne which is the Seat of Miracles your Lord of the world, and the present age, a support and shade to all that inhabite the world you equallize the great Darius your Throne resembles that of Solomon's, you'r second Cyrus, a Conquerour of countrys, a Strengthener of the root of justice, and an eradicator of violence and oppression. The above-mentioned makes his request that from the Raigns of Shaw Jeham, Aurongzeeb, etc. we have been continually dutiful servants, perticularly at the reduction of Hughly, and Conquest of Curnattuck. We then supply'd the Imperiall Troops largely with ammunition and provision, and by our innocent dependence on your Majesty have obtained the favour to be exempted in all places (Surratt excepted) from Custom etc., duties Besides in the warrs between Shaw Allum and Cawn Buxch (Shah Alam and Kam Bakhsh) for our taking care of Metchlepatam (Masulipatam), Chinnapatam, and all the Sea Coast, We have received Sirpaws (Sar-o-pas) as a reward for our Service. We are in hopes upon sending our present towards Court that we should have been exempted from Custom, but the Present being detained a great while in Metchlepatam upon a Husbullhookum (hasbu-l-hukum) being granted under Zoudy Cawns (Ziya-ud-din Khan's) Seat it was freed and brought to Calcutta for the readyer conveyance of it to Court by the way of Bengall to be presented to a clean aspect, that thereby we might obtain favour to be exempted from Custom its a favourable opportunity for us that it will be presented in the beginning of this Raigne, and that we obtain the utmost of our desires.

We hope that an Husbullhookum will be granted directed to the respective Governours through whose Governments our present shall pass to Convoy it to the extent of them.

What injuries we have received and what violences have been offered to us by Moorasheed Cooly Cawn (Murshid Quli Khan) they are not concealed from Your Majesty's Tribunal, whereby our commerce was wholy obstructed, much to our prejudice.

The Phirmaund (farman) which was lately sent from Pattana, we have behaved ourselves conformally to the orders specifyed therein, which we hope Zoude Cawn hath made his request about to Court.

Wee'r in hopes on our presents arrivall at your Imperiall

> Majestys tribunall a hoosbullhookum by way of favour will be granted directed to the Subaships of Bengall, Behaar and Orisa, to permit our business to go on as formerly.[27]

The English authorities brought the influence of a 'celebrated Armenian merchant', named Khoja Sarhad (spelled as Coja Surhaud in English records) to have their affairs pushed through at the Mughal Court, where he enjoyed the friendship of a eunuch. The eunuch was entitled as the 'Chief Eunuck' to Azim-ush-shan, father of Farrukh-siyar, and on the latter's accession to the throne, became known as Nazir Khan. Sarhad had had business dealings with the English for a long time, and was, at this time, indebted to them to the extent of Rs. 38,831 (according to a document dated 28 January 1713).[28] Sarhad contacted Nazir Khan, and according to the Company's proceedings, dated 19 October 1713, 'this Nazir Khan's intercession prevailed with the King', who issued two orders to the governors and officers of all provinces between Calcutta and Delhi, asking them (1) to ensure safe transit to the presents the Company had despatched for him, and (2) 'to pass all the English trade in his dominions, with the usual freedom till his royall *phirmaund* is obtained'.[29]

The Royal orders were delivered to Murshid Kuli Khan on 3 January 1713; they asked him 'to permit the English trade as formerly in Aurengzeb's time and not molest them'.[30] The arrival of the news at the English settlement at Calcutta on 4 January was celebrated with tumultuous rejoicings by the English community. The following account of it is to be found in the Company's records:

> After three Volleys of small short from all our soldiers we began the healths of our Queen and of King Furruckseer fireing 51 great Guns to each health after which we drank prosperity to the Hon'ble Company with 31 Guns and success to their trade with 21 Guns more and all ships in the Road fired at every health, after this at night we order'd a Large Bonfire to be made and gave our Soldiers a tub of Punch to Chear their hearts, we also ordered our Merchants to write to their Correspondents everywhere of this Husbull Hookum and how greatly we Honour and Esteem the Kings Gracious favour and what Rejoycings we made at it.[31]

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 111-2. [28] *Ibid.*, p. 100. [29] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 153. [31] *Ibid.*, pp. 153-4.

But the Company's worry was not yet over. The interim orders issued by the imperial court were in the nature of a stop-gap arrangement; the formulation of final orders was stayed until the detailed instructions that were to be incorporated in them had been considered. Nothing could be obtained from the Delhi Court without persistent efforts, and, therefore, the English authorities, on the very next day of their rejoicings, decided to send a four-man embassy to Delhi; of these three were Englishmen, John Sunman, John Pratt and Edward Stephenson, and the fourth was the Armenian merchant Khoja Sharhad.[32] Sharhad was promised two sums of fifty thousand rupees each which were to be paid to him only if he fulfilled his undertakings: (1) to procure orders confirming all the privileges the Company enjoyed in the Mughal dominions, and extending those privileges to some other areas; and (2) to procure the privilege of custom-free trade at Surat.[33] A considerable amount of money was given to the embassy for expenses at Delhi; the Company authorities knew that without money their men would not be 'able to effect anything at that Court'.[34] In Bengal itself, where sometimes local officials, ignoring the imperial and the Nawab's orders, demanded duty from the Company's men, presents and bribes were offered. The English suspected Murshid Kuli Khan of conniving at the behaviour of his officials, and fearing that he might make an unfavourable recommendation to Delhi, they gave him suitable presents.[35]

The Mughal capital was, at that time, preoccupied with serious court intrigues, and to add to the preoccupation came the Jodhpur prince, Ajit Singh's invasion of the imperial territories. The latter event ended in a negotiated agreement, the main term of which was that Ajit Singh would give one of his daughters in marriage to Farrukh-siyar. After the marriage had been celebrated, the English petition was again propped up by means of bribes, and though the intrigues were continuing, the details were prepared, and the completed case was submitted for the imperial *farman*. The royal assent was given [in 1717] and in all thirty-four orders were sent round containing details to concessions and instructions for observance by heads of different departments of the government. The order relating to Bengal, Bihar and Orissa said:

All magistrates, and aumils, and officers of the state and jagheerdars, and fougedars, and karoorees, and rahdars, and guzer-

[32] *Ibid.* [33] *Ibid.*, p. 158. [34] *Ibid.*, p. 228.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

bauns, and zemindars, for the time being, and to come, of the province of Bengal, Bahar and Orissa, and the port of Hooghly, and the other ports of the provinces aforesaid, who hope for the royal favours. Know, that at this season of victory and conquest, Mr. John Surman and Coja Sarhud, agents of the English Company, have caused to be represented to the throne of justice and equity; that, according to the sign manual of his Majesty, who is received into the mercy of the Almighty, and to prior sunnuds, the English Company has been exempted from customs throughout the empire, excepting the port of Surat; and in the port of Hoogly they pay annually three thousand rupees in lieu of customs, as a peshcush to the treasury of the high Sircar. They hope that, conformable to former sunnuds, the royal firmaun may be granted.

The command which subjects the world to obedience is issued forth. Whatever goods and merchandize their agents may bring or carry by land or water in the ports, quarters and borders of the provinces, know them to be custom-free, and let them have full liberty to buy and sell. Take annually the stated peshkush of three thousand rupees; and besides that, make no demands on any pretence. And if, in any place, any of their effects be carried off by theft, endeavour to recover them, and punish the thieves, and restore the goods to their owners. And wheresoever they shall establish a factory, and buy and sell goods and merchandize, afford them assistance and favour on just occasion. And on whomsoever of the traders and weaver, &c. they shall have a just claim, cause payment to be made to their agents according to equity and right, nor let any one injure their agents. Neither obstruct their boats, whether hired or their own property, on account of Katbarra, &c.

And likewise they have humbly set forth, that the Dewans in the provinces demand the original sunnud, and a copy under the seals of the Nazim and Dewan of the province. To produce the original sunnud in every place is impossible. They hope that they will credit an authentic copy under the seal of the Kazzee, and not demand the original sunnud, nor press them for a copy attested by the Nazim and Dewan. And in Calcutta the Company have an established factory: the taalucdarree of Calcutta, and Soota Lootee, and Govindpoor, in the districts of the perganah of Ameerabad, &c. in the province of Bengal, they formerly purchased from the Zemindars, and the stated rent thereof, being one thousand one hundred and ninety-five

rupees six annas, they pay annually. And there are thirty-eight villages, the rents of which amount to eight thousand one hundred and twenty-one rupees and eight annas, may the taaluc-darree of these villages also be granted, the rents thereof to be paid yearly by them, and the income to be received by them.

The respectable order passed. Let credit be given to a copy under the seal of the Kazzee; we command, that they hold as usual the villages which they have purchased, and grant them the taalook of the other villages before-mentioned; let them purchase them from the owners, and let the Dewan of the province yield them possession.

They have also represented, that from the time of his blessed Majesty, who is received into the Divine Grace, a discount is taken in the treasuries of the province upon the coins of Cheenapatan; but in effect the silver of the said coins is of the same standard as those of the port of Surat, by which means they suffer a great loss: may the high command be issued forth, that provided their silver be of equal quality with the standard of the port of Surat, &c. it shall suffer no obstruction: and that whosoever of the servants of the Company shall be indebted, and fly from the place, be sent to the chief of the factory: and that on account of the fougedarree, and other forbidden articles, by which the agents and servants of the Company are much aggrieved, they be not molested.

The strict and high order is issued forth, that from the fifth year of the blessed reign, if the silver struck at Cheenapatam be equal to the coins of the fortunate port of Surat, ye shall not insist on a discount: and whosoever of their servants shall be indebted and fly from the place, seize and deliver him to the chief of the factory; and molest them not on account of the penalties on the forbidden articles. They have also represented, that in Bengal, and Bahar, and Orissa, the Company have established factories, and desire to erect factories in other places. They hope, that in whatever place they may establish a factory, forty beegas of land may be granted them for that purpose out of the high sircar: and their ships are sometimes driven a-shore by the force of the tempests, and wrecked; the magistrates of the ports injuriously seize the goods, and in some places claim a quarter part: and in the island of Bombay belonging to the English, European coins are current; may the fortunate coins be struck according to the custom of Cheenapatan.

The order which must be obeyed is issued forthwith, let the

customs of the other factories in the provinces be observed: and of this society (which has factories in the imperial ports, and dealings at the high court, and has obtained Firmauns, the pledges of favour, exempting them from customs) take care of the goods of the ships which are wrecked and destroyed, and do right by them: and in the island of Bombay let the fortunate coins be struck after the manner of the coins of the empire, and pass current: and on every occasion acting conformably to this enlightened decree, avoid and forbear to do any thing contrary to the strict and high command. And demand not every year a new sunnud. In this be exact and punctual. Written on the 27th of Moherrum, in the fifth year of the auspicious reign.[36]

The *farman* was first proposed to be issued under the seal of the prime minister, but the Company's ambassadors at Delhi apprehending that it might not be honoured by the Nawab of Bengal, again made a prayer that the document should bear the seal of the emperor.

It heightened the dissensions between the favourites of the Emperor and the Vizir; the ambassadors found their difficulties increased; and contemplated a long, and probably a fruitless negotiation, when they were advised to bribe a favourite eunuch in the seraglio. No sooner was the money paid than the Vizir himself appeared eager to accomplish their designs, and the patents were issued under the highest authority.[37]

'The presents that accompanied the ambassadors were valued at thirty thousand pounds sterling'[38] and, including heavy bribes, the *farmans* cost the Company more than £ 100,000.[39]

One corruption gave birth to another. The concession of custom-free trade was allowed to the Company, and not to individual English traders, who, when trading for their personal profits, did not form part of the Company and were not entitled to it. But, as Mill observes:

[36] Reproduced in Henry Vansittart, *A Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal, 1760-1764,* pp. 9-15.
[37] Mill & Wilson, *The History of British India,* vol. III, p. 34.
[38] Robert Grant, *A Sketch of the History of the East India Company,* p. 126.
[39] Fort Saint George Council's letter to Admiral Watson (Consultations dated 20 August 1756), S. C. Hill, *Bengal in 1756-57,* vol. I, p. 199.

> The President of Calcutta granted his *dustucks* for protecting from the duties and taxes of the native government, not only the goods of the Company, but also the goods of the Company's servants; and possibly the officers of that Government were too little acquainted with the internal affairs of their English visitants to remark the distinction.[40]

The Bengal Nawab, however, took action against the Company on a different ground. He picked out the relevant sentence in the *farman,* (which said: 'Whatever goods and merchandize their agents may bring or carry by land or water in the ports, quarters and borders of the provinces, know them to be custom-free, and let them have full liberty to buy and sell') and, as was later on affirmed by the Company's Directors also, he interpreted the imperial *farman* to mean that exemption was granted only on goods imported or to be exported, and not on inland trade. He accordingly took his decision and enforced it with determination. The main reason which impelled him to resort to it was that the *dustucks* granted by the President of Calcutta to the Company's servants for private trade were often for inland trade.[41] He considered 'the practice at once destructive to his revenue, and ruinous to the native traders, on whom heavy duties were imposed: and he commanded the *dustucks* of the President to receive no respect, except for goods, either imported by sea, or purchased for exportation'.[42]

Whether the Nawab liked the *farman* or not, he honoured it for the reason that Farrukh-siyar, though very far from Bengal and involved in court intrigues, should not be given an excuse of displeasure. The Nawab's prudence did not, however, accept the instruction in the *farman* that the Company should be made landlord of thirty-eight villages. This, if carried out, would have given the Company 'a district extending ten miles from Calcutta on each side of the river Hoogley'. Ostensibly he did not oppose the operation of the imperial mandate, but had his way by deterring the holders of the land from disposing of it to the Company. The Nawab's wish was heartily welcomed by the owners themselves, and this part of the *farman* remained unfulfilled until the native governments grew weak and the English grew strong.

[40] Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 36. [41] Mill, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-7. [42] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

CHAPTER TWO

Fort William

THE ENGLISH East India Company was the biggest trading concern in Bengal, and since periods of unsettled political condition were not rare, it maintained a defence force, and later felt called upon to fortify its settlement. How the need of fortification arose in the closing years of the seventeenth century is this in brief: In 1696-7, Raja Shobha Singh of Chtauya rebelled, with the help of some feudatories, against the Mughal rule in Bengal, and overran a large part of that province, creating terror in the people, including the English traders. (It was this rebellion for the suppression of which Aurangzeb had sent Azim-ush-shan, as stated in Chapter I.) Fearing that their factories might be looted, the English Company maintained 'a friendship with both parties in such manner as that the Raja doth not suspect them'.[1] The Company, however, believed that victory would ultimately be the Nawab's, as indeed it was. But the rebellion and the alarmist situation created by it for the Company gave birth to the need of fortifying the settlement in Bengal. The proposal was allowed by the Company's Court of Directors to be carried out 'with frugality'.[2] No permission appears to have been sought from the government of Bengal, for the Court asked their local agents, in their letter dated 26 January 1698, to 'carry it so evenly and calmly with the Government there, that they may connive at, if not approve your fortifications, as it is most likely they will, when they see you don't take any advantage thereby to quarrel with or oppose them'. The Court added: 'But if you could get an open approvall of them by the Mogol or Nabob the better.' The Court gave the following advice on the Company's attitude to the quarrel between the two powers: 'And if you should be forced to joyn with either to do it in such a manner as will admit of a fair Excuse if question'd for it by the other and that what you did was the Effect of meer necessity not choyce, that Merchants desire no Enemys and would create none.'[3] The desired fortifications were ready in a few months,

[1] Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 20. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 28 and 32-3.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

and on 26 August 1698, the Court wrote to the Bengal representatives: 'We approve of the fortification you have made, and wish you to strengthen it by Degrees as you can without any public offence to the Countrey or the Great Men.'[4]

The fortified settlement was named Fort William by the Court of Directors (in their letter dated 20 December 1699). The letter gives the following justification for further strengthening of the fortification:

> We are apprehensive of the Mogols death and that Civill Wars are very likely to ensue and without a fort well strengthened, you and our Estates are in danger, and we are loth to expose either, as was done in the late War. But if a Regular fortification will make the Moors suspicious, We apprehend you may do something, that may Answer the End pretty well in building your factory very strong with Brick and Lime.

In many letters in the future, the Court always emphasised the need of building strong fortifications.

The political developments of the several decades after the death of Aurangzeb really justified the Directors' and their Bengal representatives' fears. In late forties of the eighteenth century, the Marathas, who had been menacing the province of Bengal for several years, grew very formidable, making the then Nawab, Alivardi Khan, nervous. The turmoil with which he was now faced was somewhat similar to the one which put him on the throne of Bengal. In 1733, he started a ruler's life as deputy governor of Bihar. In 1739, Shuja-ud-din Khan (son-in-law of Murshid Kuli Khan) who succeeded his father-in-law in the government of Bengal in 1727, and who had appointed Alivardi Khan to be his deputy in Bihar, died, and was succeeded by his son, Sarfaraz Khan. Alivardi Khan, in accordance with the prevalent custom, and with the aid of court intrigues, assassinated Sarfaraz, and, defeating his army, declared himself Nawab of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Now, he was finding himself unequal to the sweeping advance of the Marathas, and had to run from place to place, with his armies, to meet them. For some time, he was sandwiched between the Maratha invasions and the revolt of one Shamsher Khan. The ruling authority thus shaken to the root, chaos and lawlessness reigned supreme. Looting under such conditions became an everyday occurrence, and people, instead

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

of looking to the ruling power for protection, raised their own defences. The contemporary British records complain of the Company not having suffered from the Marathas' loot alone, but also from excesses by the Nawab's people. The Company's Book of Standing Orders for May 1748 says:

> Yesterday we received a letter from Edward Eyles, Es., &c., Council at Cossimbuzar, dated the 29th April, advising that our merchants' gomastahs at Maulda have complained that some of the Nabob's people had been there and treated them very ill for refusing to comply with their demands for large sums of money, and threatening to plunder their effects in case they stood out. That on receipt of their letter they informed Nowarris Mahomed Cawn and Chaineray thereof, and requested them to write to the Nabob about it, to which they answered that they should be very willing to comply with their request, but apprehended, the Nabob's affairs were in such a state at that time, that their writing to him would avail but little.[5]

In addition to these, the French also constituted a fear to the English. According to the Fort William Consultation dated 3 January 1749, the French at Chandranagar, took possession of the English Company's garden, 'by force of arms', and the latter submitted a petition to the Nawab saying that the French had broken 'the neutrality of the Ganges'.[6]

While the series of events, as they unfolded themselves from the time of the rebellion of Shobha Singh in 1696-7, necessitated building of fortifications, the fact remains that permission was never obtained from the ruling authorities, and the Company were conscious, as is evident from the letters quoted above and other letters, that what they were doing might be considered wrong by the authorities. This issue the Company would not raise even at the court of Farrukh-siyar when a petition was made and a *farman* obtained for all manner of concessions. In regard to the protection ordered by that *farman* to be given to the Company, the following was provided for: 'And if, in any place, any of their effects be carried off by theft, endeavour to recover them, and punish the thieves, and restore the goods to their owners.' This obviously applied to ordinary thefts, and not to loots which were the result of invasions or rebellions. Most of the fortifications came

[5] *Bengal & Madras Papers,* vol. II, 1688-1757.
[6] *Ibid.*

up or were strengthened during the periods of wars, rebellions or other kinds of lawlessness, when the authorities of government, occupied elsewhere, did not pay any heed to them. But even though the fortification was an accomplished fact, it could, at any time, be asked to be demolished by the government under the vast unwritten powers vested in it, and the Company, possessing no permission, could not lawfully complain of injury.

Such was the position when Alivardi Khan restored peace by concluding a treaty with the Marathas in 1751, whereby he agreed to pay them annual tribute of one hundred and twelve thousands of rupees, and also ceded to them the revenues of a part of Orissa. A few years passed in peace. Then came to him the news of the mounting power of the Europeans in the South; the battles on the Coromandal Coast had established British superiority over their French rivals and also over the Indian princes. Alivardi Khan was worried; but he was already on the right side of eighty, and his death was not far off. Early in 1756, he fell gravely ill, and passed away on 10 April.[7]

[7] Or 9 April, according to some accounts.

CHAPTER THREE

On the Coromandal Coast

On the Coromandal Coast, in what is known as the Deccan, the French, and later the English, had been actively participating in political intrigues, and succeeded in subordinating several rulers to their will.

Dost Ali Khan was then the Nawab of the Karnatak, and since he had assumed the Nawabship, rendered vacant by the death of his uncle, Saadatulla Khan, without obtaining the sanction of the Nizam, the Mughal Viceroy for the whole of the Deccan, he formed an intimate friendship with the French Governor of Pondicherry, Bencit Dumas. Dumas turned the friendship to the advantage of his countrymen in India by pressing upon Dost Ali and obtaining from him permission to coin money, a privilege which the English already enjoyed. The advantage was very great indeed. In the sphere of commerce, it raised the reputation of the Indo-French money, established a very profitable trade in bullion, and earned for the French Company Rs. 200,000 annually as profits on the coining. In the political field, it imparted to the French superiority over many an Indian prince, whose constant engagement in wars often rendered his treasury empty. 'As a reward for the success of his negotiations in this matter, Dumas was made Knight of the Order of St. Michel, and received patent letters of nobility.'

The next gain of the French was the town of Karikal, a fort on the river of that name, and ten villages in the country adjacent, and all the lands depending upon them. This gain, made so easily in 1739, was the result of clashes and court intrigues between Indian princes and pretenders to thrones. Karikal was situated in the kingdom of Tanjore, whose ruler, Tukaji (grandson of Shivaji's brother, Venkaji), died in 1738; his eldest son and successor also died the same year, and the throne became the bone of contention between Tukaji's remaining two sons, Sahooji (legitimate), Pratap Singh (the offspring of a concubine), and another claimant. By a clever device, the commandant of Tanjore, Sayeed Khan, put Sahooji on the throne, but soon, turning against him, replaced

him by a pretended cousin of his, named Sidooji. Sahooji escaped on horseback lest he should be killed. He requested help from the French in consideration of the territories mentioned above. The French, who had been looking for an opportunity to secure a footing in Tanjore, jumped at the offer, and after obtaining the document of formal cession of the territory, Dumas despatched two ships of war, with troops, artillery, and warlike stores, to take possession of Karikal and afford the promised assistance. But meanwhile Sahooji had succeeded in his object by bribing the principal nobility of Tanjore, and sent word declining the French help, which also meant, as was mentioned specifically, the cancellation of the agreement about Karikal, etc. In a personal letter, however, Sahooji informed Dumas that he would stand by his word, but the circumstances were such that the fulfilment would take time. The letter was dismissed as an excuse, and while Dumas was in a state of provocation, he obtained an offer from Chanda Saheb, son-in-law of Dost Ali, more intimate with the French than the father-in-law, telling him that with the help of the forces under his command, he (Chanda Saheb) would compel Sahooji to adhere to his agreement. Chanda Saheb's force—four thousand horse—was commanded by one Francisco Pereira, a Spaniard in his service. Pereira was 'intimately attached to French interests' and secured a prompt success; on 14 February 1739, the cession, as originally intended by Sahooji, was effected. Sahooji, though still occupying the throne, was surrounded by enemies like the French and their allies out of the palace, and in the palace by court intrigues, which again ejected him and put Pratap Singh on the throne. The new ruler, as a proof of his regard for the French, further added to the territory ceded to them by the 'agreement' which was enforced by Chanda Saheb's forces. In 1741, Pratap Singh authorised Dumas to fortify the town in possession of the French in the Kingdom of Tanjore.

Another hazardous event coincided with this event, and the French turned it to their advantage. The disintegration of the Mughal Empire had thrown the Deccan in greater confusion than the rest of it, and once again the Marathas were ascending to supremacy. As if that supremacy was being questioned by Dost Ali Khan, whose son-in-law, Chanda Saheb, had, on his order, treacherously seized the kingdom of the Rani of Trichinopoly (in 1736), and had, three years later, offensively interjected in the affairs of Tanjore, the Marathas, headed by Raghoji Bhonsle,[1]

[1] Major G. B. Malleson, *History of the French in India,* 1868, p. 256.

stormed Karnatak, killed Dost Ali on the battlefield, imprisoned Chanda Saheb at Satara, and, as if to establish their valour beyond doubt, destroyed enormous amount of life and property. The panic-stricken families of Dost Ali and Chanda Saheb moved into Pondicherry under the protection of the French fortifications, with their treasure chests, precious stones and other valuables. Later, elephants, horses, and provisions were also carried, making Pondicherry the most prosperous and overstocked town in the Deccan. After the victory of their arms, the Marathas installed Dost Ali's son, Safdar Ali, on the throne of the Karnatak, binding him to the agreement that he would pay them ten millions of rupees by instalments, and that all the Hindu princes on the Coromandal coast would be reinstated on the places they held prior to 1736. This latter clause of the treaty was put to a mischievous use by Dumas, who raised a Muslim army of five thousand strong, drilled them in European fashion, and gave birth to the idea that India should be conquered by the aid of Indians, and that there could arise issues on which Hindus and Muslims could be divided. But subsequent developments refused maturity to the French designs; and, then, the French possession was too small and their position insignificant to become rendezvous of the concentration of Muslim powers.

The first series of events leading to the appointment of Safdar Ali as Nawab of Karnatak closed in 1740. Two years later another series began to unfold itself. There were court conspiracies resulting in the murder of Safdar Ali, in court officers' invitation for a Maratha attack, in new appointments for the Karnatak throne, in the Nizam's invasion, and in the appointment by him of his own nominee, Anwar-ud-din Khan, as Nawab, of Karnatak.

Anwar-ud-din was the first Indian prince to come in armed clash with the French and suffer defeat. Since 1740, France and England had been engaged in hostilities, taking opposite sides in the War of the Austrian Succession, which lasted for eight years. The European war strained relations between the French and English in India, but the former, being without a fleet in Indian waters, were anxious to avoid a clash here. Dupleix, who had taken over the governor-generalship of the French India from Dumas in 1741, made overtures to the English to observe peace, but when hostilities were started by the English, he summoned eight ships from the French possession of Mauritius, and launched an attack on Madras. Anwar-ud-din, in whose territory both the French and the English possessions were situated, and who had

been requested by both to exercise a restraining influence so as to avoid a clash, asked the French to stop their action, and said that if his order was not obeyed, he would send an army to enforce it. Dupleix was determined to carry out his designs, but being alive to the necessity of keeping the Nawab in good humour, he told the Nawab that he would hand over Madras (the English possession) to him. The English surrendered Madras to the French in September 1746, but the Nawab never got possession of it, and when he sent a small force to compel the French to honour their word, his men were incessantly fired upon and compelled to retreat.

While fresh hostilities between the French and the English in India were in the making, the War of the Austrian Succession came to a close, and the Treaty of Aix-la Chapelle (1748) restored Madras to the English.

In the same year, Asaf Jah, Nizam-ul-Mulk, died leaving his throne at the mercy of the sword. His eldest son, Ghazi-ud-din, instead of staying in the Deccan to claim the throne on his father's death, had preferred Delhi, where, as Wazir of the emperor, he had become king-maker. In 1754, he blinded the emperor in order to instal his own nominee, Aziz-ud-din, on the Delhi throne; and when the new emperor attempted to free himself from the overbearing control of the Wazir, the Wazir had him murdered. Ghazi-ud-din thus struck the last blow on the tottering Mughal Empire, for it was Aziz-ud-din's son, Shah Alam II, who, moving from place to place for a long time, eventually became a pensioner of the English.

To return to the Deccan, the dying Nizam-ul-Mulk, disinheriting his second son Nasir Jang, who had been engaged in constant rebellion against him, had nominated Muzaffar Jang, the son of a daughter, to succeed him, and in order to impart validity to the nomination, had obtained ratification from Delhi, although in the then existing condition of Delhi, it was virtually meaningless. At the time of Nizam's death, Muzaffar Jang was at Bijapur, and Nasir Jang, being present on the spot, availed himself of the opportunity, and, by buying over the leading men of the court and the army, proclaimed himself Nizam. In a perplexed state of mind Muzaffar Jang thought of the Marathas with whose assistance he might conquer the throne from Nasir Jang. He proceeded to the Maratha Court at Satara and also contacted Chanda Saheb who had been in captivity there for seven years.

While the conditions of the Maratha assistance were being nego

tiated and Muzaffar Jang was insisting on unconditional release of Chanda Saheb, Dupleix stepped into the affair, turning the circumstances to his favour. Chanda Saheb, whose wife and valuables were still in Pondicherry under the protection of the French, had been in regular correspondence with the French authorities and kept them posted with all the recent developments. Having been a Maratha prisoner for a long time, he had naturally developed a great aversion to the Marathas, and indicated that he would prefer French help to restore him to the rulership of the Karnatak and Muzaffar Jang to the throne of the Deccan. Dupleix welcomed the opportunity, and justified his ambition for territory by the fear of a Maratha invasion and by the likelihood of the English increasing their power with the alliance they had entered into with Sahooji, the deposed ruler of Tanjore. (The English actually despatched a force of 430 Europeans and 1,000 Indian soldiers with the object of reinstating him to the throne.) The first thing Dupleix did was to secure the release of Chanda Saheb by giving the Marathas a guarantee for the payment of Rs. 700,000 as ransom. The Marathas were agreeing to fight for Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Saheb only for monetary gain, and this offer cut them out of the field. Now Dupleix was looking forward to the prospect of becoming a 'king-maker'. Agreements were entered into as to how the French were to be compensated on the attainment of victory. Dupleix lent the two pretenders 400 European and 2,000 Indian soldiers drilled in the European fashion. Chanda Saheb raised a force of 6,000 and Muzaffar Jang that of 30,000. The combined army, commanded by French General, d'Auteuil, met on the field with 20,000 picked troops of Anwar-ud-din, including sixty 'European adventurers'. In the first few contests the French were pushed back, and the wounded d'Auteuil had to be replaced by de Bussy, but the victory eventually came to their side. It was attained mainly by the sacrifice of the Indians; the French lost twelve men killed and sixty-three wounded; of the Indian soldiers 300 were killed and wounded. On 3 August 1749, this drama of great significance for the future was enacted at Ambur, and a few days later, Muzaffar Jang proclaimed himself ruler of the Deccan, and nominated Chanda Saheb Nawab of the Karnatak. In the first flush of delight, Chanda Saheb conferred upon Dupleix the sovereignty of eighty-one villages in the neighbourhood of Pondicherry.

The English had, at the same time, as already indicated, been using Sahooji as a tool, to catch up with the French in political influence, and continued their march towards Tanjore, even after

discovering that the Maratha Prince's cause did not find enough response in the people, Sahooji's promise to present the fort of Devicotta to the English, as a price of their assistance in restoring him to the throne of Tanjore, had come at the right moment as an excuse. But when they stormed the Fort, and Pratap Singh (who was to be replaced by Sahooji), conscious of the French support to Chanda Saheb whom he considered an inveterate enemy, bought peace by ceding to them the Fort and an area of territory yielding an annual revenue of Rs. 36,000, the English abruptly abandoned the cause of Sahooji.

Rivalries between the English and the French for commercial gains had by now yielded place to rivalries for territorial gains, and the French and the English, with Indian princes and pretenders as pawns between them, were endeavouring to excel each other. While on the one hand, the English Governor Floyer of Fort St. David, congratulated Chanda Saheb on his elevation as ruler of the Karnatak on the other, they whetted the ambition of Anwar-ud-din's son, Muhammad Ali, and Nasir Jang, and promised them support if they fought for the thrones of the Karnatak and the Deccan, respectively.

This time the French and their Indian allies suffered a crushing defeat; but it was not the English arms or English command which made the final decision. Nasir Jang had raised an enormous army, consisting of 300,000 men, which was numerically far superior to the army of Muzaffar Jang, which suffered from the additional disadvantage of mutinous mood for want of pay. Nasir Jang had also secured the assistance of a Maratha force of 10,000 horse.

Dexterous Dupleix, however, did not lose heart, although he was face to face with the prospect of yielding the French superiority to the English. Just when the victory had lulled the care-free victors to rest, a French force penetrated the Maratha camp about midinght and killed about 1,200 of their men. Once again the French morale, which had been impaired in the midst of the previous war by some of their officers' inopportune conduct, was rehabilitated, and after the English had returned to Fort St. David and Nasir Jang had moved to Arcot, Dupleix, reinforcing his navy and land forces, seized Masulipatam, and then Tiruvadi, a strategic place. Dupleix thereafter turned his attention to the major game which was to undo the recent victory of Nasir Jang, Muhammad Ali and the English, and planned to achieve his end more by intrigues than by the power of arms and men. By winning over the principal elements at the court of Nasir Jang to the in-

terests of the French,[2] he isolated Muhammad Ali from Nasir Jang. Muhmmad Ali was left alone in the field when his territory was attacked by the French. The intrigues had done their job, and Muhammad Ali's stronger army—10,000 or 12,000 strong together with an English-trained contingent of 1,000—was put to disorderly retreat by 250 European and 1,200 Indian soldiers under the French. The same design was invoked in dealing with Nasir Jang. It was arranged that 'malcontent nobles' at the court of Nasir Jang 'should withdraw their forces from those of their feudal superior, and should range themselves, a short distance from them, under the flag of French. To such an extent were the details of this arrangement carried out that a French standard was secretly conveyed to the malcontents to be by them on the proper occasion on the back of an elephant in the most conspicuous part of the field. Other secret arrangements were at the same time entered into between Mozuffer Jung and the conspirators, with which Dupleix had no concern.'[3]

Now, when the signal came from the conspirators, the French Commander, de la Touche, set out on the night of 15 December 1750, with 800 Europeans and 3,000 Indians, and ten guns, to meet the enemy army of 25,000. The plan now began to unfold itself exactly as it was designed, and of this de la Touche was assured by the foremost elephant which displayed the French standard on the back. And when Nasir Jang saw, in the midst of the action, that some of his leading men were retiring from the field, he upbraided one of them (Nawab Kuddapah) who chopped off Nasir Jang's head, giving finale to the treacherous drama.

Dupleix emerged from this action as the real ruler of the Deccan, of 35 million people. Muzaffar Jang, returning once again to the throne, paid him 'the homage and respect due to a feudal superior'. A solemn ceremony of investiture was held, at which Muzaffar Jang declared Dupleix Nawab or governor of the country south of the river Krishna up to Cape Camorin, including Mysore and the entire Karnatak. 'He also bestowed upon him as a personal gift the fortress of Valadaur, about fifteen miles from Pondicherry, with the villages and lands dependent upon it, as well as a separate jagir of 100,000 rupees a year. He conferred upon him the title of *munsub*, or commander of 7,000 horse.' He directed that the French currency should be the sole currency of southern India. He confirmed the sovereignty of the French Company over the newly acquired districts of Masulipatnam and Yanoon and extension

[2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*, p. 262.

of the territories about Karikal. He promised 'never to grant a favour without Dupleix's previous approval, and to be guided in all things by his advice'. And it was at Dupleix's instance that Chanda Saheb was restored to his formal though nominal dignity. As if the gratitude expressed by Nasir Jang in terms of states was not enough, he agreed to pay to the French Rs. 500,000 for the army commanded by French commanders.

Early in 1751, Muzaffar Jang was killed in a minor action which was brought about by Muhammad Ali by exciting an intrigue between Jang and some feudal chiefs; (here also a French force, under the command of Bussy, was with Muzaffar Jang). The only headache this death caused Dupleix was to find a 'ruler' equally submissive and agreeable to French interests, and he found one in Salamat Jang, a brother of Nasir Jang. From his abode in a prison, Salamat Jang was taken by Dupleix to the throne of the Deccan. The new ruler confirmed all the concessions his predecessors had granted to the French, added to their possession at Masulipatam a considerable area of the surrounding territory, and made a fresh cession. He also ordered the rebuilding of all the French factories his brother Nasir Jang had destroyed.

During the brief period of their conquest, the French created a strategy, a policy, and many lessons, which were later emulated by the English. From them conclusions can be deduced clearly explaining the circumstances which helped the ascendancy, first of the French, and then of the English, in the South.

The convention of kingship being handed down from father to the eldest son or his nominee, which assured continuity of the peace and stability of the rule, was often broken by ambitious princes, and in these examples of breaches, the European traders found an opportunity of throwing their influence and power on the side of one prince or pretender or the other. A deposed prince or a pretender could not, without the possession of a territory, command resources of men and revenue, the two essential pre-requisites for raising and maintaining an army. For example, Chanda Saheb, who had spent seven years in a Maratha jail at Satara before he was ransomed by the French, did not have a trained army of his own. The condition of the other pretender, Muzaffar Jang, was not much better. The two, however, had enormous movable possessions (jewellery, etc.), safely stored in the French settlement of Pondicherry, upon which they drew to raise their respective armies for the impending war. So that lack of money might not cause discontent in the temporarily recruited army, the French

lent them £ 50,000 and promised to lend more. A hurriedly improvised army, like the one raised by Chanda Saheb and Muzaffar Jang, could serve only as cannon fodder, and this deficiency was made good by the French providing leadership and a force of European and Indian soldiers trained in European fashion.

All the principal rulers of the south found themselves, at one time or another, during those years, in similar or nearly similar conditions, and had inevitably to invoke or accept the help of the French or the English. The two trading Companies, possessing power to mint money, and importing bullion from their mother countries, enjoyed another considerable advantage over their Indian allies aspiring to wrest thrones from their rivals. There was wide unfavourable gap those days between England's export and import business with India, which was covered by export of bullion to the latter country. The French Company too possessed large quantities of the precious metal to turn into coins. Thus their possessions were: disciplined military leadership equipped with European weapons and a few hundred of European soldiers and a thousand or two of Indian soldiers; navy, whose potentiality was at once recognised by Indian princes who did not have any of their own and who derived considerable benefit from it; a credit in the market and in the princely houses whose constancy was ensured by commerce, a credit which was a shaky commodity in the case of princes whose fortune and misfortune were substituted, as if by turn; immunity from loss of trade or possessions, which they managed to secure by secret negotiations with the enemies of their own Indian allies (for example, while Dupleix was preparing for war as an ally of Muzaffer Jang and Chanda Saheb, he was carrying on secret negotiations with Nasir Jang also, fearing lest that prince should emerge victorious from the impending action); the belief that the real contestants for power were the Indian princes, and not the French or the English who were satisfied with the little possessions granted to them at the conclusion of hostilities by the victor; unlikelihood, in the foreseeable future, of the imperial power moving into the Deccan from Delhi, to bring back that region under its sway, and reduce the foreign traders to humiliation as Aurangzeb had done; the certainty that family feuds and dissensions among ruling chiefs would never end; and lastly, the behaviour of the Marathas, who, though yet capable of waging decisive wars, preferred immediate monetary gains to acquisition of fresh territories.

Such was the political condition in the Deccan when the rising French influence was considered by the humiliated English a challenge to their trade and prestige in the future. In this plight the English found in Muhammad Ali Khan a surviving son of Anwar-ud-din and claimant to the throne of the Karnatak, a prince whose cause they could espouse. When the last battle had eventually turned the scales in favour of the French and their allies and Anwar-ud-din had been killed, and Muhammad Ali had fled to Trichinopoly, the fear of trouble this man might create in the future appeared to Dupleix an obstacle to the enjoyment by the French of undisturbed and peaceful supremacy in the south. He, therefore, opened conciliatory negotiations with Muhammad Ali. But Muhammad Ali was now left the only hope of the English, who promised him considerable help should he decide to fight for the throne of the Karnatak, held until recently by his father. The negotiations were protracted by Muhammad Ali if only to gain time, but as was inevitable there soon was an action between the French and their allies on the one side and the English and Muhammad Ali on the other, and the result was that he had to fly to Arcot with two or three attendants.

At Arcot Muhammad Ali hit upon a master stroke of strategy.[4] The forces of Arcot, having been sent to the battle of Trichinopoly, that city lay virtually defenceless, and Muhammad Ali advised the English that if they could send a force, it could be seized easily. The English readily accepted the suggestion, and (to quote their own words) 'put it in execution, a Detachment of one hundred and thirty men under the Command of Captain Robert Clive embarked the 22nd Ultimo on board the Wager for Fort St. George where being reinforced with Eighty Europeans they marched to Arcot and beyond expectation entered it and took possession of the Fort without opposition'.[5] (Clive was a writer or clerk in the service of the Company, but 'being of a Martial Disposition and having acted as a Volunteer' in 'the late engagements' on behalf of the English, had been granted 'an Ensign's Commission upon his application for the same'.[6]) At the time of his triumphal entry into Arcot, he was only twenty-six years of age.

[4] From the letter of the President and Members of the Council of Fort St. David, dated 30 September 1751, sent to the Court of Directors, and from the previous letter referred to therein, it can be easily inferred that the author of the strategy was Muhammed Ali, and not Clive as British historians have suggested. (*Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*)

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.*, St. David's letter to the Directors, dated May 1747.

But the fluke of Arcot enhanced rather than assuaged the apprehensions of the English, and their only hope was that the victorious Chanda Saheb, reduced to bankruptcy by costly wars, would remain as such. The English described the condition, in which they found themselves or the country found itself then, thus:

> Rains are setting in and Chunda Saib distress's for money to pay his army; should he be able to surmount these difficultys there is nothing left for Mahomud Ally [Muhammad Ali] but to make the best terms he can—as ours and the Nabob's force are not able to face them in the field—The greatest disadvantages we have and to labour under is the indolence and the apprehensions the Nabob is continually under from the French and his want of money, the last We are in hopes of removing by being able to collect some of the Revenue belonging to Arcot, the King of Tanjore remains neuter, and that of Misore has sent a Force who are now near Trichenopoly ready to join the Nabob, should Chunda Saib prove successful both these country's.[7]

The forces of the English and Muhammad Ali, besieged in Arcot by the forces of Chanda Saheb and the French, had one advantage and one disadvantage, both considerable. The latter far outnumbered the former and were without doubt in a position to give a crushing defeat to their enemy, but the protection of the fort in which the English were locked, placed them in a situation of vantage: they rained heavy fire on their enemy, but escaped from the effect of the returning fire. This advantage enabled the besieged force to prevent the enemy from entering the fort even when they had made two breaches. But, naturally, the leadership of the force was in a state of desperation, and managed secretly to send word that they badly needed to be reinforced. The seige of Arcot began on 24 September, and when the prolonged state of indecision and the attenuating strength of the English and Muhammad Ali's small force threatened to cast the die against them, re-inforcement arrived—150 Europeans under the command of Captain Kilpatrick and 2,000 Marathas. On 14 November 1751, the seige was broken, and the opposing forces were put to flight. They were chased, and in another engagement near Arni (twenty

[7] Fort St. David's letter dated 30 September 1751, *op. cit.*

miles from Arcot), they suffered a heavy loss in their men power.[8]

There was a lull for a while, but causes for another engagement soon appeared. In the operations leading to the victories of Muhammad Ali, that prince, having exhausted his monetary resources and being unable to pay for the maintenance of English troops and his own, had applied for assistance to the ruler of Mysore, a rich state, and received his consent to help and also to pay for the Marathas lent by Murari Rao. The cost of Mysore's help, which Muhammad Ali had undertaken to pay, tacitly or expressly, was the territory of Trichinopoly, a prize over which the greedy eyes of the English had also been fixed. The English had expressed the wish that the victors of Arcot should continue their march to Jinji, whose seizure they considered important from the point of strategy, but 'the Mysore and Morattas [Marathas] refused to join till the engagement the Nabob had entered into was fulfilled'.[9] Pretexts and negotiations put off a settlement for several months, and when Mysore despaired of getting Trichinopoly peaceably, he, with the Marathas in his pay, went over to the side of Chanda Saheb and the French in order to make defeat of Muhammad Ali and the English certain. The imbalance created by this shift naturally struck the English with anxiety, and they induced the ruler of Tanjore to assist Muhammad Ali with a relieving force—the inducement had to be repeated before it brought forth the desired result. For a long time defeat and victory were alternated between the contestants, but eventually what made the final decision was not the sword, but money—the one who lacked it dropped off

[8] From the following quotations can be derived the suggestion that, by pinning the feather of victory singularly to the cap of Clive, English historians have been partial to their compatriots:

> Our Detachment with the Nabob's people at Arcot were besieged from the 24th September to the 14th November by the French and Chunda Saib's son not being more than a month Provision, We were oblig'd to send Captain Kilpatrick with a Command to their relief, but before he arriv'd the Enemy had made two large Breaches and attempted to storm the Fort were beat off with a very considerable Loss, the next day Captain Kilpatrick appearing and at the same time two thousand (2,000) Morattas horse, they raised the seige and decamp'd leaving their Cannon. On the 3rd Decr. Captain Clive with the Morattas engag'd then in the Field near Arny, a place about twenty miles on this side Arcot, where they were routed, many killed and made Prisoners, they took the advantage of the night and each shifted for himself, their next renesvouze was at Chittaput. *Ibid.*, Fort St David's letter dated 25 January 1752.

[9] Fort St. David's letter dated 5 July 1752, *Ibid.*

defeated, and the one who still possessed it emerged victorious. Chanda Saheb, having been rendered penniless, depended upon the French whose own resources were diminishing so fast that Dupleix had to employ his personal fortune. Mysore was apparently not prepared to add to his commitment beyond the maintenance of the Maratha force. Muhammad Ali, on account of 'the unsettled state of the province', was 'unable to collect the revenues' and failed 'to fulfil his contract with' the English 'in defraying the expenses of the troops', amounting to nearly a lakh of rupees per month. They, however, believed that he would pay them when his 'affairs were settled'. Even the Nizam of the Deccan, Salamat Jang, friendly to the French, was 'greatly distressed for money to pay his Army'. The British alone were in a better financial position than these all, and they were all the time feeling: 'We think this an uncertainty and a Burthen too great for us to bear, and if we do not the French will immediately have the Province. His Debt is near twenty Lack, this is a large sum, The Revenues indeed of the Company's new Acquisition amount to near two Lack Per annum.'[10]

The Trichinopoly war had already lasted a year, and held out the prospect of lasting longer and ending in favour of the French if their depleted purse was reimbursed and the strong force of their allies paid regularly; but Dupleix was a servant of the French Company, which, provoked at his action of ruining it by substituting warfare for commerce, sued for peace and obtained it by complete surrender in the negotiations conducted in London on government level. Prudently enough the English Ministry despatched a considerable fleet to India in the midst of the negotiations so that it might clinch the issue in the event of breakdown of the negotiations. But the French had no intention to ask any concession and, therefore, a treaty was easily concluded. It accepted Muhammad Ali as ruler of the Karnatak and enabled the English to occupy the position which four years ago belonged to the French.

[10] This paragraph is based on and the quotations in it have been taken from, the Fort St. David's letter dated 29 October 1753 to the Court of Directors, *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FOUR

Nawab's Complaint against the English

After Alivardi Khan had declared himself Nawab of Bengal, thoughts had been entertained, more than once by a few adventurous Englishmen, of conquering it for the British Crown. In 1744, Colonel Milles, 'a subaltern in the Ostend Company's service', and later 'a soldier of fortune', submitted a memorial to the King of England, praying that if the government could adopt his plan, they would establish an empire in the East without much difficulty. 'Being a good soldier', says Nestor (in the *Calcutta Gazette* dated 29 June 1786, 'he learnt to despise the military of' India 'and thought it might be conquered by a small body of Europeans.' The king was so much taken up with the Milles's plan that he expended a big sum [£ 15,000] on the preparation of an expedition (according to the Diary of Lord Melcombe quoted by Nestor), which, however, had to be abandoned, as the Diary says, 'at the instigation of the East India Company'. In June 1751, the proposal was revived by Milles, but was again vetoed by the Company.

In 1754, after the English had acquired considerable political influence in the south, Colonel Caroline Frederick Scot, the Company's chief engineer in India, made a reconnoitering tour of Bengal and suggested to the Court of Directors that (1) the fortification of Fort William should be strengthened, and (2) if the English wished they could conquer that province. Charles F. Noble, a friend of Scot's, gives an idea of the plan in his letter (dated 22 September 1756) to the select committee at Fort St. George:

> The Colonel was at great pains to procure a perfect knowledge of that Court,[1] government, country and people, and I believe few men knew it better than he did at his death.
>
> As the Colonel was soon known to several of the greatest men of that country by means of Omy Chund (an eminent merchant at Calcutta, and the best acquainted with the Company's affairs and interest of any one in that country), he had several con-

[1] The Court of the Nawab of Bengal at Murshidabad.

ferences with them, particularly with Rajah Tilluchund of the Burduwan Country and Cozee Waszitt [Khoja Wajid] of Hugelie, who had mentioned his arrival to the Nabob.

The old Nabob Alliverde Cawn then greatly advanced in years (between 70 and 80) signified a great desire to see and confer with him, as he understood him to be one of the King's officers and an experienced soldier, a character he always respected, as being one of the greatest of his time in that country himself, and accordingly invited the Colonel to his Court; and Cozee Salli the Nabob's ambassador at the Sowah Rajah's Court at Sittarah, after having concluded a Peace between the Nabob and Morattas being then at Calcutta on his return to Moxudavad [Murshidabad, which, before Murshid Quli Khan renamed it after him, was known as Muksadabad], the Nabob ordered him to see the Colonel and repeat his desire of seeing him, which he did in a meeting and conference in February 1754 at Omy Chund's country garden there.

Colonel Scott understood that on the death of the old Nabob there would be a dispute for the Crown between the gentlemen, his nephews and his grandsons, who had already discovered ambitious views.

He acquainted the Company therewith in one of his letters, and of his apprehensions of the danger all their Settlements would be in of being pillaged by one or other of the competitors, and of the weak and defenceless condition in which he found all their forts and garrisons.

The military works and fortifications he intended, and was empowered to erect in Calcutta, could not be compleated in many years, therefore he thought of making some slighter works for the more immediate defence of the place, (against the blow he saw impending, and which we have now unfortunately received) a plan of which he presented to the Governor and Council, and which was approved and set about directly. He ordered the ditch that he found had already been carried on half round the town, to be widened and deepened, and to be carried on quite round, draw-bridges and redoubts, to defend them, to be erected at three or four places, and two larger redoubts to be erected, one at each extremity of the town by the river side, not only to command the river but to defend the draw-bridges there, and the sluices for filling and emptying the ditch, with many other works for the preservation of the town in case of a sudden attack, before the more regular works could

be accomplished. But his departure from Bengal a little thereafter hindered their progress, though he left Mr. Wells, engineer, to carry them on in his absence according to particular directions left with him for that purpose, and his death put a stop to them.

By what Colonel Scott observed in Bengal the *Jentue* [Hindu] *rajahs* and inhabitants were very much disaffected to the Moor [Muslim] Government, and secretly wished for a change and opportunity of throwing off their tyrannical yoke. And was of opinion that if an European force began successfully, that they would be inclined to join them if properly applied to and encouraged, but might be cautious how they acted at first until they had a probability of success in bringing about a Revolution to their advantage....

There is a man named Nimo Gosseyng the High Priest of the Gentues. ... This priest gave Colonel Scott very good information and advice relating to the affairs of that country, and told him he could bring 1,000 of these men to assist the English in four days warning when needful. The Colonel did him some service while he lived and I dare say he has a respect for his memory to this day.[2]

Scot died prematurely, but his plan was submitted to the Court of Directors, who communicated the following decision regarding the fortification to the Fort William authorities on 29 November 1754:

> We observe Collonel Scott laid a Project before the Board for securing our Settlement from any attacks from the Country Forces which were of opinion in the present juncture ought to be guarded against.... Do not begin or make any progress in the works until they have your Sentiments leave and concurrence. The reason of this restriction arises from our apprehensions that if they are begun without the previous consent of the Country Government or at least such a connivance as you shall judge will be as effectual as their consent, wee may expend great sums of money and either be entirely prevented from finishign them or lye at their mercy for leave to proceed at an expence not to be borne, that these apprehensions are not without foundation appears by Collonel Scott's letter to us of the 2nd March last in which wee are informed that the French

[2] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 326-8.

had been stopt for two Years and upwards from finishing their projected works for the security of Chandenagore.

In order therefore for obtaining a proper Grant or connivance from the Country Government for leave to fortifye Fort William without any obstructions or impediment you are hereby directed to make such applications to the Nabob and the members of his Durbar as you shall judge will be most likely to be attended with success, and as we are sensible no favours can be obtained from such a Mercenary Government as that of Bengal without Money wee do empower you to dispose of any sums to the Nabob and to such others as you shall think propper provided the several sums so to be disbursed do not altogether exceed one hundred thousand Rupees. The manner of conducting this affair wee shall leave entirely to your discretion and shall only say that the great age of the Nabob and the present emptyness of his coffres seem to be circumstances greatly in favour of an immediate application being attended with success.... You must at the same time make the Government sencible that wee have no intentions to render ourselves formidable to them but that our only view in erecting any works is to protect our property against the attempts and designs of any European power.[3]

It is clear from the Directors' letter that the work on the additions was not to be started until 'consent' of the government had been obtained or until bribes had ensured 'connivance'. It is also clear that the French, who had themselves been refused permission by the Nawab's government to carry out similar works, did not constitute a danger, and that additional fortification was intended to secure the English 'settlement from any attacks from the country forces'. Colonel Scot, who drew out the scheme of 'the military works and fortifications'[4] and on which the above instructions of the Driectors were issued, made no mention of the French; on the contrary he referred to Indian powers. Nay, Scot, as his friend Charles Noble wrote, entertained hope of success in a revolution that could be brought about with the active help of the English, a revolution that would turn out to their advantage and against the Nawab.[5]

The authorities of Fort William forwarded the Directors' letter

[3] C. R. Wilson, *The Indian Records*: *Old Fort William in Bengal,* vol. II, pp. 15, 18-20.
[4] Hill, vol. III, p. 326. [5] *Ibid.*

to William Watts, chief of the English factory at Kasimbazar, on 6 August 1755, seeking his opinion as to the way they should proceed. Watts wrote back in his reply dated 15 August:

> I must declare to you Gentlemen that I think a previous application to the Nabob for leave to fortifye Calcutta a step highly improper for us to take for in case the Nabob should absolutely refuse us his permission we must at once give over all thoughts of fortifying or do it in defiance of him. . . . The sums we are at liberty to offer part whereof must of necessity be divided amongst his Ministers would I fear appear to him very inconsiderable.[6]

They, therefore, put the work in hand without permission of the government and contrary to the instructions of the Directors, who had emphasised that permission or consent of connivance must first be obtained. That the work was started and partly carried out and 'against a country enemy' is admitted in Fort William's letter dated 28 September 1755, to the Court of Directors: 'We shall pay due regard to your orders in regard to the fortifications Colonell Scott had projected for the defence of the place against a country enemy which are carrying on agreeable to his instructions, but are not yet near finished.'[7]

In the letter dated 21 February 1756, Fort William, reporting the progress of the work, it was said: 'The Redoubt at Perrins being nigh compleated.'[8] The works were put under the supervision of engineer Bartholomew Plaisted, and assistant engineer, O'Hara. The Fort William authorities' letters to the Directors make no mention of the work having been started without permission, and one can justifiably infer that the truth was deliberately withheld.

The government of Bengal had become aware of the additional works the English were carrying out, of similar works put in hand by the French in order not to lag behind their rivals, and of the deep involvement of the two in the political upheavals of the Karnatak in the recent past. According to Jean Law, Alivardi Khan

saw with indignation and surprise the progress of the French and English nations on the Coromandel Coast as well as in the Deccan, for by means of his spies he was informed of every-

[6] Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 28. [7] *Ibid.*, p. 31. [8] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

thing that happened there. The comparison which he made between the condition of his Provinces and the troubles which had agitated the Peninsula so long and which he doubtless attributed to the weakness of the Governors, only contributed to flatter his self-esteem. But he was not free from anxiety. He feared that sooner or later the Europeans would attempt similar enterprises in his government. . . . This disposition of the Nawab showed itself especially when he came to know by his spies that some fortification or other was being erected in Calcutta or Chandernagore. The least repair or the pulling down of a house near the Fort was enough to alarm him. An order was immediately issued to stop the work; and if, after representations, the Nawab thought it was of no importance, the affair would be finished by making him a present, and we would be allowed to go on with the work. It would appear that his plan was to oblige all the European nations indifferently to have no forts. "You are merchants," he often said to our and the English *vakils*, "what need have you of a fortress? Being under my protection you have no enemies to fear." He would probably have tried to carry out his ideas if he had thought he would live long enough to finish the business, but he was old.[9]

He died on 10 April 1756.

Alivardi Khan was succeeded in the government of Bengal by his daughter's son, Mirza Muhammad, better known as Siraj-ud-daula (born in 1729).[10] The late Nawab had no son, but had three daughters who were married to the three sons of his elder brother. Siraj-ud-daula's father, Zain-ud-din, had been killed in a battle in 1747; his two uncles, Nawazish Muhammad, Governor of Dacca, and Sayyed Ahmad, Governor of Purnea, also died before the death of Alivardi Khan. Thus he was left the only claimant to the Nawabship, although it was destined to be his, because Alivardi Khan had, as far back as 1752, publicly declared him his heir. But while Alivardi Khan lay on his deathbed, Nawazish Muhammad's widow, Ghasiti Begam, became interested in the Nawabship, and aspired to secure it for an infant, Murad-ud-daula, whom she had adopted as her son. (Murad-ud-daula was the son of a deceased brother of Siraj-ud-daula.) Ghasiti Begam possessed 'immense riches', and 'got 20,000 of the military over to her party, with which she entrenched herself at' Moti Jheel, near Murshida-

[9] Jean Law's Memoir, Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 160-2.
[10] According to S. C. Hill, vol. I, p. xxvi.

bad, 'and took care to be well supplyed with all sorts of arms and ammunition'.[11] But she was overpowered by Siraj-ud-daula without a fight, and thus was removed a thorn in the way of the Nawab-designate.

A month after his accession, Siraj-ud-daula had to subdue another rival; it was Shaukat Jang, his cousin (son of Sayyed Ahmad), now holding charge of Purnea. In the middle of May 1756, Siraj-ud-daula set out with a big army to meet his rival, but while he was yet far from Purnea, Shaukat Jang sent envoys conveying through them his submission to the new Nawab. Jean Law says:

> It was in the effervescence of these troubles that the English gave Siraj-ud-daula reason for complaint against them. Always led away by the idea that he would not have sufficient influence to get himself recognised as *Subahdar*, they carried on a correspondence with the Begum. . . . It is even said they had understanding with the Nawab of Purneah.[12]

From the Ghasiti Begam affair arose the second cause of the Nawab Siraj-ud-daula's displeasure with the English. It was the so-called Krishna Das episode. Krishna Das was a son of Raj Ballabh; and Raj Ballabh was Nawazish Muhammad Khan's deputy at Dacca. Nawazish Khan's treasure 'was in the hands of his widow', Ghasiti Begum, and his deputy, Raj Ballabh.[13] During the last illness of Alivardi Khan, Raj Ballabh was at Murshidabad, 'and as, owing to the last illness of Alivirdi, Siraj-ud-daula was in practical possession of the government, Siraj-ud-daula called upon him for an account of his uncle's affairs, so as to ascertain how far his estate was indebted to Government for the revenues of Dacca. Failing to give a satisfactory account, Raj Ballabh was imprisoned, or at any rate placed under strict surveillance, until Siraj-ud-daula should be in a position 'to force him to compliance'.[14] According to William Tooke of the English Company, Raj Ballabh and Krishna Das

had served under Alliverdi Khawn for many years, and as there was great reason to apprehend they had been guilty of many

[11] William Took's Narrative, *Ibid.*, p. 249.
[12] Jean Law's Memoir, Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 163-4.
[13] Hill's Narrative, *op. cit.*, p. xliv.
[14] *Ibid.*

frauds and amassed immense treasures by oppression and other unjust ways, an account of their administration was demanded by Seir Raja Doulet [Siraj-ud-daula], to know what was become of the King's revenues collected by them for some years past. Radabullub [Raj Ballabh] no sooner got intelligence of what was going forwards but makes interest with Mr. Watts[15] to get protection for his son and treasure in Calcutta, which was granted him and also for his whole family. By the time everything was secured the Nabob became more pressing with Radabullub, and positive orders given him to immediately obey, and deliver him the accounts he demanded, when he acquainted the Nabob that his son was fled and taken protection with the English with everything appertaining to him, which rendered it impossible for him to comply with his demands, and as it was currently affirmed that he had carried off with him full fifty three laacks of rupees, the Nabob to outward appearance made a point in having him delivered up, which the Council [Fort William Council] were made acquainted with, both by messages from the Nabob as well as from many of the principal people at the Durbar.[16]

Whatever may have been the motives of the English, the impact they left on the mind of Siraj-ud-daula was one of extreme suspicion.

The Nawab's third complaint againt the English arose from the loss they caused to the government exchequer and the disturbance they created in the commerce of the country. Their abuse of the privilege of the custom-free trade was continuing. Murshid Kuli Khan's order interpreting the Mughal *farman* had been worn out by time and by the upheavals that followed his death. How the Company was behaving in 1756 and in the previous years was summed up thus by J. Z. Holwell:

> The continual abuse of the Company's dusticks, by their servants, has been for the space of forty years last past, another great cause for repeated just complaints from the Durbar; for thereby the Emperor was robbed of his legal customs on a considerable proportion of the trade of the provinces.... Various were the terms of this illicit compact; sometimes the

[15] Chief of the English factory at Kasimbazar.
[16] William Tooke's Narrative, dated 10 November 1757, Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 278-9.

Company's servant was entitled to one-eighth, or one-fourth or half of the profits on the trade so covered. At other times, with sorrow I speak it, your dustick was sold at various prices, from 200 to 25 rupees each; and to such a shameful prostitution did this trade in dusticks come to, that it was no uncommon thing to see on the registar a trade of two lack per annum carried on in appearance by persons known never to have been worth five pounds, in their lives, nor that had credit to this amount in your Presidency....

The Government's spies in the Settlement were well acquainted with prostitutions and abuse of the Company's Dusticks, and sent daily advices thereof to the Durbar, where it used to be often thrown out in terrorem, "that they had a long Dustick account to settle with the English." And Surajud Dowla in 1756, declared he would prove from vouchers in his possession "that the English had defrauded the King in his revenues, by covering the trade of his subjects with their Dusticks, to the amount of one crore and a half (one million five hundred thousand pounds sterling) in the space of fifty years."

Your Court of Directors were so sensible of the repeated abuse of this indulgence, that, I think, there are no less than five and twenty standing orders against it transmitted to your President and Council of Fort William from the year 1702 to 1756, each of these orders directing, on detection, restitution of the King's duties, immediate dismission from the service, and the aggressor to be sent to England on the first returning ship; but notwithstanding these orders, and the utmost vigilance of your Council abroad to prevent this practice, it was found impossible.[17]

Another contemporary narrative (by Captain David Rannie, Mariner) says:

The injustice to the Moors consists in that being by their courtesy permitted to live here as merchants, to protect and judge what natives were their servants, and to trade custom free, we under that pretence protected all the Nabob's subjects that claimed our protection, though they were neither our servants nor our merchants, and gave our dustucks or passes to members of natives to trade custom free, to the great prejudice of the Nabob's

[17] J. Z. Holwell, *Indian Tracts,* a narrative submitted by him to the Court of Directors.

revenue, nay more we levied large duties upon goods brought into our districts from the very people that permitted us to trade custom free, and by numbers of their impositions (framed to raise the Company's revenue) some of which were ruinous to ourselves, such as taxes on marriages, provisions, transferring land property &c. caused eternal clamor and complaints against us at Court.[18]

William Tooke, a servant of the Company at Fort William, says in his narrative that in their behaviour with the people in the three villages, namely, Calcutta, Sutanuti, and Govindpur, of which they were landlord and exercised all the *zamindari* rights, the English were much more exacting:

> It is well known that the Company's affairs are conducted here, at each of their head Settlements, by a Governour and Council, (to which station their servants formerly succeeded according to seniority) and that each Councellor had the charge of some post or separate branch of the Company's business; accounts of which were delivered into Council monthly or otherwise, as the nature of the post would admit of, and which posts were also regulated according to their servants' standing in the service. This custom the Court of Directors thought proper to break through in the year 1750, by sending out Mr. Holwell (who formerly served them at Calcutta in quality of surgeon) and appointing him perpetual *zemindar*, and in Council; which high power of his, according to the custom of the country, extends to life and death, corporal punishment, fines, &c., and that without controul or consulting anyone. Judge then how obnoxious a person invested with such power must be, to a trading people, particularly if he made good his promises to the Company; which was to encrease their revenues double to what former *zemindars* had done. The revenues of the *zemindary* formerly seldom or ever exceeded 60,000 rupees per annum, indeed more frequently were much less, arising from the sales of a few dutys which were farmed out, fines, *etlack*, &c. At this time, as provisions and other necessarys of life, were more reasonable at our Settlement than at the other factorys, as also having little to fear from the Cutcherry, and everyone being admitted to have recourse to our Courts of judicature, then it was that trade

[18] Reflections on the loss of Calcutta by Captain David Rannie, Mariner, Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 384.

flourished at Calcutta, and was crowded with merchants and inhabitants, not only with the natives, but with all sorts of nations. But upon Mr. Holwell's arrival here, a sudden and quick change of affairs was soon seen. He had agreed with the Company to encrease their revenues, which must be done by some methods or other or he get into disgrace and turned out of his posts; accordingly he set out with converting most bodyly punishments into fines, not that a wealthy person by that means had it more in his power than a poor one to commit any crime, for the nature of the misdemeanour was not so much consulted as the circumstances of the aggressor who was to be fined accordingly. The *etlack* was another method made use of to increase the Company's revenues. The more confusion, wrangles and disputes among the natives the higher is the *etlack*, which is levyed as follows: a black fellow shall meet another in the street or elsewhere, whom he shall call by some nickname or otherwise use ill, the offended person has no more to do, than to run to the Cutcherry, and demand a peon (or soldier of this country) to be put as a guard on him who offended him, till such time as the dispute can be heard and decided by the *zemindar*. Let what will be the nature of the complaint, a *peon* is not to be refused, for it is to be observed, every *peon* thus employed receives four *punds* of *cowries* a day, one half for his own subsistance, and the other half of the Company's account; which cowries are to be paid by the aggressor, or as the *zemindar* shall pass a decree. I have known upwards of 2,000 complaints standing on the *Cutcherry* books at a time, and scarce ever less than 1,500, most of which could have been decided in a day, had it not been for the encrease of the Company's revenues; whereas if the controversy was ended in six months it was lucky, a year, 18 months, nay 2 years, was no uncommon thing, and what was still a greater hardship, the party's being obliged to attend the *Cutcherry* as often as the *zemindar* went there himself not knowing when the dispute would be heard. The rice farm was also run up to a most exorbitant price by his emissarys; which made that article more than as dear again as in former years, to the great prejudice of the poor inhabitants. The *Buzars* also sold in proportion, which made the grievance at last so great that several applications were made by different grand jurys to the bench of justices for redress; but as it was to encrease the Company's revenues they were always overlooked. One shamefull method among

others of adding to the revenues was of admitting licenced prostitutes, which were admitted to be under the Company's protections, by paying a monthly tribute. In a word no one method was neglected, that could be thought of, which was not put in execution to make good his promises to the Company. Repeated complaints were all this time made by the merchants, the lower people not daring to do it, and as both rich and poor and of all degrees and denominations found themselves at last entirely deprived of the Company's protection and liable to be daily fleeced or punished according to the caprice of a single person, prefered living under their own Government as well as of that of foreign nations to that of ours. It is incredible to think the number of inhabitants that quitted the Settlement soon after Mr. Holwell's *zemindary* commenced, and many, whose affairs would not admit of it, kept their goods out of our districts. As the natives were not always satisfied with his decrees, application was frequently made to the *Durbar* by them for redress; which caused the Nabob to make continual complaints in behalf of his subjects of the gross abuse of the *zemindar's* power and of the insults shewed his flagg by stopping boats with his dusticks, and obliging many to pay our customs after having paid the Government's duties.[19]

Another affair which also caused some disputes, was sequestering the effects of Pranjeeboom Coberage, *gomaster* to Raja Tillekchaund of Burraduan, on account of a debt said to be owing by the latter to one Mr. Wood (though a disputed account). Upon the complaint being filed in court, Pramjeeboom Coberage refused giving an answer as it was not a debt contracted by his master but a bond endorsed over to Mr. Wood by a person with whom his master had large accounts and had credited him for the amount of it some time before, besides his master was no subject of Great Britain, but held a very considerable post under the Nabob, to whose Courts of judicature he was willing the affair carryed and promised to abide by such decree as should be given. Besides the person with whom he was in dispute was also a *Mogul's* subject, so he did not think our Court had anything to do with the dispute. The usual forms of Court being over, and the time elapsed for his or his constituent's appearance, in default whereof a warrant of execution was issued out to seize his *gomaster's* Pramjeeboom Coberage's house, and effects. Upon the sheriff's officers going there, the fellow immediately

[19] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 266-8.

quitted his house and went to inform his master of what had passed. In his house were found a quantity of money, jewels, and goods, and also a great many bonds and papers, some for very considerable sums, both from Europeans as well as blacks. Tillekchund no sooner heard of the seizure of his house and effects to answer a demand of 7,000 rupees, but he applyed to the Nabob for redress. The prodigious troubles in the country at that time (being about the time that the old Nabob died) prevented his complaint being heard, or it would certainly have been attended with a stoppage of our business at the *aurrungs*; however it still helped to inflame the natives against us, as well as to add one, to many other complains made to the Nabob against the English.[20]

Such was the East India Company whom Siraj-ud-daula had to face upon his accession to the Nawabship of Bengal—seemingly intriguing in state politics, abusing the custom-free privilege to the detriment of the state exchequer, oppressing Indians in the *zamindari*, which it had obtained by questionable means, making daring encroachments on the rights of those who lived outside of that *zamindari*. And his problem was how to deal with the Company.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 280-1.

CHAPTER FIVE

English Disobedience and the Nawab's Attack

THE FIRST thing Siraj-ud-daula did was to demand of the English that they return Krishna Das to him. The date of the letter in which this message was conveyed is not known. According to the letter of Watts and Collett (the chief and the second at the Kasimbazar factory), dated 16 July 1756, to the Court of Directors, the Nawab sent his order 'some time after his coming to the Government',[1] but according to Holwell's letter to the Court of Directors, dated 30 November 1756, the Nawab asked Krishna Das to be delivered up on 14 April.[2] If the latter is to be believed, the order must have been despatchd when Alivardi Khan was on his death bed. The difference in the dates is, however, immaterial. In any case, it is certain that it was in the month of April,—more probably in the first week of the month—that Siraj-ud-daula addressed his demand to the English.

The conflicting statements which members of the Fort William Council and other leading men made (after the fall of Calcutta to Siraj-ud-daula) create a confusion about the Krishna Das affair. But an analysis easily takes one to the facts. We have it from the Directors' letter[3] that Krishna Das secured his admission into Calcutta by bribing principal men of Fort William. The letter, addressed to the Governor and Council of Fort William, says: 'We are informed from good authority, that two of our servants, of considerable rank, actually received from Kissendass upwards of fifty thousand rupees, for our protecting this person against Surajah Dowla.'[4] Which two received the bribe from Krishna Das is not to be found in the records, but in his *Indian Tracts,* Holwell takes considerable pains in explaining to the Directors that he was not one of them. He was not called upon to explain his conduct, but did so voluntarily.

[1] *Bengal & Madras Papers,* vol. II.
[2] Quoted in Holwell, *op. cit.*, p. 362.
[3] Dated, 23 March 1759. [4] *Ibid.*

The messenger who carried the Nawab's letter to the Governor of Fort William was Narain Singh, brother of Raja Ram, chief of 'Cuttack and commander of spys'.[5] Narain Das, when he tried to contact the Governor and members of the Council, was ill-treated and turned out of the English premises. The Governor, Roger Drake, himself admits that he had the messenger turned out:

> That the Perwannah was refus'd to be received by Messrs Manningham, Holwell, and myself is a fact, and the Messenger was ordered out of the bound, our then reasons that induced us to act, were, that this Messenger or rather Spy came into our bounds in disguise, and his first foot on shore was at Omychund's House, who received him privately.[6]

One can only guess whether Drake was one of the two who were bribed by Krishna Das, but that Narain Singh came in disguise was a fabrication under which Drake endeavoured to take shelter when he explained the causes of the English distress at the loss of Calcutta. Why should an official of the Nawab have chosen to go in disguise to serve his chief's order on the governor? We have it from Richard Becher, a member of the council and not involved in the Krishna Das affair, that there was no 'reason' for Narain Singh's 'coming into Calcutta in disguise'. Becher adds that Narain Singh 'was sent by the Nabob in a publick character to demand the person and wealth of Kissendass which the English unjustly detained from him .... I am therefore firmly of oppinion that he did not enter Calcutta in disguise'.[7] The 'gentlemen concerned' with the Krishna Das affair, Becher goes on to say, 'took care to keep the rest of the Council', including himself, 'in the dark about' it; he came to know of it later.[8] 'Could it ever be imagined', Becher suggests, 'any Prince would suffer a sett of merchants to protect from him any of his subject much less a man who had enjoyed a considerable post under the Government, or would tamely put up with the insult to his messenger.'[9]

In a joint statement, Becher, Luke Scrafton, Thomas Hyndman, and Samuel Waller (all members of the Kasimbazar council), said: 'When the Nabob sent a Perwannah to demand him (Kissendass),

[5] *Bengal & Madras Papers,* vol. II. [6] *Ibid.*
[7] Richard Becher's letter dated 25 January 1757, to the Fort William Council, Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 159.
[8] *Bengal & Madras Papers, Ibid.,* (letter to the Secret Committee of the East India Company, dated 22 March 1757).
[9] *Ibid.*

Mr. Drake tore the Perwannah and threw it in the face of his (the Nawab's) messenger.'[10]

Watts describes the reaction the Narain Singh episode had on him thus (as chief, he was at Kasimbazar then, nearer to the Nawab):

> The moment I was acquainted with the affair I dreaded the consequences of afronting so considerable a servant of a young man intoxicated with power and wealth, and who expected an implicit obedience to his will. I therefore immediately applied to all the great men about the Nabob to prevent Narang Sing's complaining, and the affair was seemingly hushed up.[11]

Both Drake and Holwell, the two men most concerned in the affair, themselves admit that they believed Siraj-ud-daula would go down in the contest for the Nawabship. Says Drake:

> It was much doubted whether Souragud Dowlet could overcome the Begum's forces and of her adherents who had promised her their assistance ... and people were much divided in their sentiments whether the Nabob would be able to establish himself as he had made himself generally odious throughout the province.[12]

Holwell is more explicit:

> We had notice also of the stand made against Surajud Dowla's succession, by the young Begum and her party, of which Rajbullob was the Chief Minister and Favourate of His Mistress, so that it became at that juncture a dangerous step to the company's interest to turn his family out of the Settlement, the more especially as for some days advices from all quarters were in favour of the Begum's party.[13]

But even after the Begum had been disillusioned and the Nawab of Purneah subdued by Siraj-ud-daula, the English at Fort William did not return Krishna Das, and the Nawab was left with a sense of annoyance.

[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid.*, letter to the Court of Directors, dated 30 January 1757.
[12] Drake's Narrative dated 20 June 1756, Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 122-2.
[13] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, Holwell's letter dated 30 November 1756.

The construction of additions to the fortifications of Fort William was bound to cause another displeasure to the Nawab. 'Some days after the submission of the Begum the spies of Siraj-ud-daula reported that if he did not take care he would soon have to fear some enterprise on the part of the European nations, that the French were fortifying Chandernagore and the English Calcutta.'[14] Siraj-ud-daula ordered English and French agents to appear before him, and when they appeared, he asked them strictly to demolish the new works. 'And,' says Law, 'as this was at the moment of Siraj-ud-daula's departure for Purneah, he threatened to go himself and raze the Forts of Chandernagore and Calcutta, if at his return he found his orders had not been carried out.'[15] According to the information given to the Nawab, the English were also digging a ditch, and he asked them to fill it up.

The French complied with the order, but the English did not. According to Law:

> ... the English made a very offensive reply to his order. I did not see it but trustworthy persons assure me it was so.[16] The rumour ran that Mr. Drake replied to the (Nawab's) spies that, since the Nawab wished to fill up the Ditch, he consented to it, provided it was with the heads of the Moors.[17]

(Both Drake and Holwell admitted later in their explanations to the Court of Directors that they received the Nawab's order and that they told him in reply that additions to the fortification had been necessited by the apprehension of Anglo-French hostilities; instructions to this effect, they added in the explanations, had been communicated to them by the Directors by the ship *Delaware*. This is a lie. The *Delaware* arrived at Madrass on 9 May 1756, and the Directors' letter in question was despatched from there to Calcutta on 11 May and, as Hill says, 'could not have reached Calcutta until after a week or ten days'.[18] But the Nawab's order reached Calcutta on '10th or 12th of May and was answered without loss of time'.[19] Therefore it is evident that the reply they

[14] Jean Law's Memoir, Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 164.
[15] Law's Memoir, Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 165. [16] *Ibid.*
[17] *Ibid.*, footnote. (In the footnote Law suggests 'I do not believe he —Drake—said so, but possibly some thoughtless young Englishman let slip these words, which being heard by the *harkaras*, or spies, were reported to the Nawab.')
[18] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 8 footnote.
[19] John Cooke's account Orme Mss., India, IV, p. 826, and Hill, vol. III, p. 393.

sent to the Nawab must have been, as Law and others say, 'very offensive'—so offensive that they destroyed its copy and none else among their colleagues had an occasion to see it. Earlier they had put in hand work on the additions in contravention of the Directors' orders, and by irrelevantly introducing into the affair the *Delaware* letter, they were only sidetracking the real issue.)

There is further evidence to confirm that the attitude of Fort William was one of resistance to the Nawab and of insulting his messengers and orders. Tooke says in his narrative:

> 'The Nawab ... had great reason to be dissatisfyed with the late conduct of the English in general, besides he had heard they were building new fortifications near Calcutta, without ever applying to him, or consulting him about it, which he by no means approved of, for he looked upon us only as a sett of merchants, and therefore if we chose to reside in his dominions under that denomination we were extremely wellcome, but as Prince of the country, he forthwith insisted on the demolition of all those new buildings we had made. The Nabob at the same time sent to the President and Council Fuckeer Tougar [Khoja Wajid], with a message much to the same purport; which as they did not intend to comply with, looking upon it as a most unprecedented demand, treated the messenger with a great deal of ignominy and turned him out of their bounds, without any answer at all; upon which a second messenger was sent to Mr. Drake, to this effect, that unless upon receipt of that order he did not immediately begin and pull down those fortifications, he would come down himself and throw them in the river. This messenger was treated as ridiculously as the other, and an answer sent agreeable thereto, as likewise by a messenger that was sent some time before, to demand the delivery of Kissendasseat.[20]

There are many letters and notes in the contemporary English records to prove, beyond doubt, that while the Nawab was anxious, in spite of repeated affronts hurled at him, that the English authorities should obey the orders of the government, the Fort William governor and his close colleagues continuously slighted him, being sure that they would repel him if he ever attacked them.

The following correspondence will indicate how the Nawab's pacific intentions proved unavailing, and a war came.

On 25 May 1756, Watts and his other two colleagues in the

[20] Tooke's Narrative, Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-4.

Kasimbazar council, Collet and Batson, sent the following letter to the Council of Fort William:

> Yesterday Golaum Hossein Cawn [Ghulam Husain Khan] sent for our vaqueel and shewed him a letter which his son Golam Alli Cawn [Ghulam Ali Khan], the Nabob's *arisbeggy* wrote him from his camp, the purpose of which was as follows: that the Nabob receiving a letter from the Governour and at the same time one from the French Director was extreamly angry and immediately sent orders to Roy Doolob [Rai Durlabh, a minister of Siraj-ud-daula], to stop our business at Cossimbuzar and to Mohunlol [Mohanlal, another minister], to write to the Nabob at Dacca to stop our business there, and has likewise ordered Cossim Alli Cawn [Kasim Ali Khan, a military officer], with a body of forces to march to Tannah Fort and has advanced them two months pay. Since writing the above we have received a message from Kunichowdry [Haris Chaudhuri], Huckembeg's *duan* [Hakim Beg, one of Nawab's revenue officer] acquainting us that 400 horse are arrived upon the Factory. As we have a very weak garrison at present we request your Honour &c. will send us a party with a supply of ammunition.[21]

On 31 May 1756, they again wrote to Fort William:

> Since our last Golaum Shaw [Ghulam Sha] a considerable *jummadar*, with his force are come upon the Factory and put a stop to all provisions coming in. We are informed by our *vacqueel* who had it from Golaum Shaw that unless your Honour &c. will fill up the ditch and pull down the new works which he hears is begun upon, he is determined to attack us, therefore if your Honour &c. are determined not to comply with his demand, we request you will send us a supply of men, as our garrison is very weak, however we think it adviseable for your Honour &c. to write a letter to the Nabob immediately.[22]

On 28 May the Nawab sought the good offices of Khwaja Wajid, who was intimately known to him and, being a big merchant, had good business dealings with the English, and wrote to him this letter:

> It has been my design to level the English fortifications raised

[21] *Ibid.* [22] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 1-2.

within my jurisdiction on account of their great strength. As I have nothing at present to divert me from the execution of that resolution I am determined to make use of this opportunity; for which reason I am returning from Rajahmaul [Rajmahal] and shall use the utmost expedition in my march that I may arrive before Calcutta as soon possible. If the English are contented to remain in my country they must submit to have their fort razed, their ditch filled up, and trade upon the same terms they did in the time of the Nabob Jaffeir Cawn [Murshid Qali Khan]; otherwise I will expel them entirely out of the provinces of which I am *Subah*; which I swear to do before God and our prophets. Should any person plead ever so strongly in their behalf it will avail them nothing, as I am fully determined to reduce that nation to the above mentioned conditions and I require that you will not on any account speak in their favour. Enclosed you will receive *perwannahs* for the French, Dutch, and Danes, in which I have assured them of my favour. I request you will deliver them, and see they are well used in their trade and other respects. Endeavour to engage those nations to prevent the English resettling themselves after I have drove them out.

(The following paragraph was wrote at the bottom in the Nabob's own hand.)

I swear by the Great God and the Prophets that unless the English consent to fill up their ditch, raze their fortifications and trade upon the same terms they did in the time of Nabob Jaffeir Cawn I will not hear anything in their behalf and will expel them totally out of my country.[23]

Siraj-ud-daula was, at this time, at Rajmahal with his army, which he had put into readiness against the Nawab of Purnea, and the nearest English factory which he could attack as his first measure to punish the English, was at Kasimbazar. The efforts he made through Khwaja Wajid for a pacifactory settlement having proved fruitless, he made a show of force, believing perhaps that it might have some effect. That at first only a show of force and authority was made seems evident from the following extract from the letter (dated 31 May 1756) Watts, Collet and Batson sent to Fort William:

We wrote your Honour &c. the 25th instant that that evening

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

> Aumeemee Beg and Asmult Cawn [Omar Beg and Azim-ulla Khan] jemidars came upon the Factory with their forces, and have ever since been very troublesome in preventing provisions and other necessaries being brought into the Factory. We are informed orders are gone to Dacca and all the *aurungs*, to stop the Honourable Company's business.[24]

The Nawab now gave orders to his force to march towards Kasimbazar with a view to seizing the English factory, but did not entirely despair of an honourable settlement. On 1 June 1756, he wrote another letter to Khwaja Wajid, from Murshidabad:

> I have received your letter acknowledging the receipt of my indent for broad cloth, horses &c., that my *chawbuck swar* had seen and approved of two horses in Calcutta and that the English had sent me one of them as a present by the Chawbuck swar. I must repeat my desire for complying with my indent of broad cloth. The horse which the English have delivered my *chawbuck swar*, I direct you to return them again, as they have neither regarded my orders nor live with me upon a good understanding, for which reason I will not accept of their present and therefore insist on its being sent back. I have three substantial motives for extirpating the English out of my country, one that they have built strong fortifications and dug a large ditch in the King's[25] dominions contrary to the established laws of the country; The second is that they have abused the privilege of their *dustucks* by granting them to such as were no ways entitled to them, from which practices the King has suffered greatly in the revenue of his Customs; The third motive is that they give protection to such of the King's subjects as have by their behaviour in the employs they were entrusted with made themselves liable to be called to an account and instead of giving them (up) on demand they allow such persons to shelter themselves within their bounds from the hands of justice. For these reasons it is become requisite to drive them out. If they will promise to remove the foregoing complaints of their conduct and will agree to trade upon the same terms as other merchants did in the times of the Nabob Jaffeir Cawn I will then pardon their fault and permit their residence here, otherwise I will shortly expel

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[25] 'The King or Emperor of Delhi, to whom the Nawabs of Bengal were nominally subject.'

that nation. Upon what pretence will the French attempt to attack them in the river; which they have never done since the settlement of Europeans in the country? I recommend it to you to endeavour by good usage to engage the French to attack the English on the river while I besiege them on shore; and the easier to induce them thereto, you may promise from me, that I will deliver the town of Calcutta into their hands as soon as I have made myself master of it.

(The following paragraph was wrote in the Nabob's own hand at the bottom of the letter.)

Please to acquaint the English minutely of my resolutions. If they are willing to comply with those terms they may remain, otherwise they will be expelled the country.[26]

That the Nawab was hoping against hope for a settlement, and being uncertain of it, was preparing for an armed action is evident from the following two letters of Watts and his two colleagues. Letter dated 2 June:

> Another large body of forces with a train of artillery is now marching to the Factory. Our *vacqueel* has ten *peons* upon him and is ordered not to come to the Factory, and all entercourse with the country people (has been) put a stop to. We have great reason to expect we shall be soon attacked, therefore request your Honour &c. will immediately send us a party of at least 100 men as privately as possible by way of Kisnagah river and march over land from thence.[27]

Letter dated 4 June:

> Since our last yesterday another considerable body of forces are come upon the Factory under the command of four *jemmidars*, and more are expected this evening. There is also a party and tents on the other side of the river opposite to the Factory where we hear they intend to place their cannon. The Nabob is expected in the city the day after tomorrow. We have information by some people that the Nabob intends attacking us and from others that they only threaten us in order that your Honour &c. may the sooner comply with their demand in fillnig up the ditch and pulling down what works you have begun upon, in which he seems peremptory. We therefore desire your Honour

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5. [27] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

&c. will either send us up a body of men that we may be able to defend ourselves or write to the Nabob that you will immediately comply with his demand.

Our doctor having been sent to Kessore Cawn and Cossumally Cawn, two of the principal *jummadars* who came upon the Factory this morning, they informed him that the Nabob was angry with us on no other account than upon your Honour &c. building a draw-bridge at Perrins and the octagon at Mr. Kelsal's garden which was blown down two years ago in the storm and now made larger, which they have taken for a new fortification, and they say that in case you will break down the draw-bridge and the octagon the forces will be immediately withdrawn; if not, we must stand to the consequence.

Since writing the above we have received the inclosed letter from our vacqueel who is at the City [Murshidabad].

By the best intelligence we can get, we have about two or three thousand forces stationed about the Factory.

If your Honour &c. will write an *arasdass* to the Nabob that you will immediately obey his orders we are in hopes he will put an end to this troublesome affair.[28]

But Fort William dismissed scornfully all suggestions to conciliate the Nawab. Watts and Collet say:

We are inform'd by Cossenaut [Kashi Nath] one of the Company's *Banyans* that Omichund and some of the principle merchants offered to contribute considerably towards making up affairs. Coja Wazeed, the greatest merchant in Bengall, who resides at Hoghley and has great influence with the Nabob, his *duan* told us that he went four times to Calcutta in order to persuade the gentlemen to make up matters with the Nabob but was threatened to be ill used if he came again on the same errand.[29]

The best confirmation of this is to be found in the Madras (Fort Saint George) Council's Minutes of Consultations. Those present at the 'Consultation' were: George Pigot (president), Stringer Lawfence, Robert Orme, William Perceval, Henry Powney, Alexander Wynch, John Smith, and Charles Bourchier. At the 'Consultation' were considered some letters from Fort William; one of them is dated 4 June 1756, about which the Minutes say:

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9. [29] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

The second dated 4th June Acquainting Us that since the date of their last they had been and are still involved in a Dispute with the Country Government occasion'd by the Nabob's taking Umbrage at their repairing and Strengthening their Line of Guns towards the River, and that by Letters from Cassimbuzar (Copies of which they send us) they are afraid Matters will be carried to Extremities, the Nabob having station'd a Party of Horsemen round that Factory and seeming much exasperated. That should they be attacked they are resolv'd to repel force by force, and to that End desire we will send them as soon as possible all the Recruits we have detained from them, or at least a Reinforcement of Five hundred (500) men with a proportionable Quantity of Arms and Stores, which if we neglect doing, they deem themselves no ways responsible for what may happen.[30]

What happened later on 4 June—the very day on which Watts, Collet and Batson sent their above quoted letter to Fort William—is recorded in a subsequent letter of Collet (of the same date) to the same address:

Since writing to your Honours our Factory has been invested by the Nabob's whole force and a large train of artillery with repeated orders to attack us unless the Chief went in person to the Nabob, which he complied with as the only method we thought of to prevent the Company being involved in war and losing all the Company's effects at the Subordinates, as our garrison was very weak both in men and ammunition.[31]

What followed next had better be told in the words of Watts and Collet (Chief of the Kasimbazar factory and his second), for they were the principal persons involved:

Accordingly, Agreeable to the Unanimous Opinion of the Gentlemen of the Factory and Officer of the Garrison, the Chief went and was introduced to the Nabob, who immediately Order'd him into Confinement, and insisted on his giving an obligation that in Fifteen Days Time the Gentlemen of Calcutta shou'd level what New Works they had raised, deliver up the Nabob's Tenants who had fled for protection there, and that

[30] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.,* Minutes dated Wednesday, 14 July 1756.
[31] Hill, *op. cit.,* vol. I, p. 9.

if it could be proved that we had falsified the Company's Dustuck by giveing them to those that had no right to them, we should pay back what the Government had suffered by loss of Dustuck. The Chief being in their hands was obliged to sign this. They then told him that his signing was of no Consequence without the rest of the Council. Accordingly upon the Surgeon's returning to the Factory and acquainting Messrs. Collet and Batson that it was necessary they should go to the Chief in order to make an end of the affair, they went and were detained prisoners, nothing more being said about the obligation the Chief had signed. The Chief solemnly asserts that he told the Surgeon to let Messrs. Collet and Batson know he did not think it adviseable for them to quit the Factory. The next day wee were ordered to deliver up our cannon and ammunition which we complied with in hopes entirely to pacify the Nabob. The army then drew off from the factory. Mr. Batson was sent back to the Factory and Messrs. Watts and Collet kept prisoners in the camp.[32]

In another letter Watts and Collet repeat more emphatically that the Nawab's intentions were good: '. . . a proof that the Nabob's intent was to accommodate matters, was that he touched none of the Company's effects at Cossimbazar except the warlike stores.'[33]

Thus Kashimbazar factory of the English was occupied by the Nawab, and its principal men taken prisoner.

[32] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, letter dated 2 July 1756, to the president and governor of Fort Saint George.

[33] *Ibid.*, letter dated 8 July 1756, to Drake, Charles Manningham, William Frankland, William Mackett, Peter Amyatt, and Thomas Boddam.

CHAPTER SIX

Failure of Conciliation : Seizure of Calcutta

After the seizure of the Kasimbazar factory, Siraj-ud-daula sought help from the French and Dutch, with a view to augmenting his own resources. Jean Law gives the following account of the Nawab's negotiations with the French:

> The Nawab was as surprised as pleased at the ease with which he had made an end of the English at Cossimbazar. The remains of the respect which he had formerly felt for Europeans made him afraid of failure in his attack on Calcutta, which had been represented to him as a very strong place, defended by three or four thousand men. He wrote to me in the strongest terms to engage the Director of Chandernagore to give him what assistance he could in men and munitions. "Calcutta is yours," he said to our Agent in full *Durbar,* "I give you that place and all its dependencies as the price of the services you will render me. I know, besides, that the English are your enemies; you are always at war with them, either in Europe or on the (Coromandel) Coast, so I can only interpret your refusal as a sign of the little interest you take in what concerns me. I am resolved to do you as much good as Salabat Jang has done you in the Deccan, but if you refuse my friendship and the offers I make you, you will soon see me fall on you and cause you to experience the same treatment that I am preparing for others in your favour." He wished us to send at once all the ships and other vessels which were at Chandernagore down to Calcutta. After having thanked him for the favourable disposition in which he appeared to be towards us, I represented to him that we were not at war with the English, that what had happened on the Coromandel Coast was a particular affair which had been arranged pacifically, and that the English in Bengal having given us no cause of complaint it was not possible to give him the assistance he asked for without orders either from Europe or from Pondicherry.

Such reasons could only excite irritation in the mind of a man of Siraj-uddaula's character. He swore he would have what he wanted whether we wished it or not, and that, living as we did in his country, his will ought to be law for us. I did my best to appease him but without any effect. At the moment of his departure he sent us word by one of his uncles that he continued to count upon our assistance, and he sent me a letter for the Governor of Pondicherry, in which he begged him to give us the necessary orders. This was, I thought to myself, so much time gained.[1]

The question whether to help or not to help the Nawab was discussed by the French Council at Chandernagar, and the decision it took was not to involve in the impending battle between the Nawab and the English under any circumstance. The French Council decision was communicated to their factory at Patna in these words:

> You will have heard by common report of the capture of the English Factory at Cossimbazar, and the orders given by the Nawab to his troops to march towards Calcutta with intent to attack it. He has written several letters to M. Renault[2] by which he informs him that as there are reasons which oblige him to chastise the English and drive them out of Bengal he offers to put us in possession of Calcutta and assures us he will support and protect us in every way on condition we assist him with all our forces against that nation. Whatever the advantages he offers us on this occasion, as it is not in our power to conform to his wishes without having been in the first instance authorised to do so by our Superiors, we have agreed that the Director should write and thank him for his favourable disposition towards us, and at the same time excuse ourselves for our absolute inability not only to accept his obliging offers but also to supply him with the assistance he demands. Not knowing what effect our refusal will have on the Nawab's mind and fearing he may take it in bad part, we think we cannot take too much precaution against the resentment he may possibly feel towards us and which must be expected from a man so violent and passionate. It is for this reason, Sir, we advise you to be on your

[1] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 167-8.
[2] 'Chief or Director of the French factory at Chandernagore, the chief settlement of the French in Bengal.'

guard against whatever may happen, and to take every precaution which may seem advisable for the security of your Factory and your own persons.[3]

But the French Council's (Chandernagar) subsequent letter to Patna exonerates the Nawab of any evil intention against the French:

> It does not appear that we have any violence to fear from Siraj-uddaula, whom we thought we had rendered ill-disposed towards us by our refusal to join him, although we made use of all possible means to satisfy him and had reason to flatter ourselves that he appreciated the force of our excuses. He has replied to the Director in very gracious terms, asking only that since we cannot assist him, we will be careful not to assist the English. He received very favourably the *wakil,* whom we sent with our compliments when he passed our Colony to go to Calcutta, and bade him return with the same compliments on his part.[4]

The reason of the French resoluteness in turning down the Nawab's demand seems to be, as is apparent from the following account from a French letter, their poor opinion of his forces:

> He (the Nawab) himself set out on the 5th, that is to say, 2 days after the surrender of the English Fort, at the head of 20,000 men. His elephants are said to be as many as 300, his artillery of 500 guns, amongst which are 84 pieces which he took from the English Factory with 500 *maunds* of powder, and 2,000 iron cannon balls. With the exception of the European artillery and its ammunition, the rest of this stuff is not very dangerous, at least to judge by some guns which we saw at the Dutch Gardens[5] where a detachment of horsemen who conducted them stayed for two days, having wandered from their road and having been refused a passage through our Settlement. We went to see them out of curiosity. Nothing is more pitiable than the way in which they are mounted and supplied. People say they have only clay bullets.[6]

[3] Hill, *op. cit.,* vol. I, pp. 15-16. [4] *Ibid.,* pp. 22-3.
[5] 'To the north of Chandernagore.'
[6] *Ibid.,* p. 20. ('Translation of a letter from M. Le Conte to M. Courtin at Dacca, dated Chandernagore, 19 June 1756').

The French resoluteness was mitigated, so far as their relations with the Nawab were concerned, by their submissive behaviour with him. It was not so with the Dutch who appear to have been impolitic and straightforward in their answer to the Nawab's overtures. What correspondence passed between them and the Nawab is not known, but the following extract from the French letter (cited above)[7] bears this interpretation:

> The agents of the two nations having presented him with our *salaams* in this place, ours was well received and even had two *betels* given him for M. Renault, but as for the Dutch he was not content with refusing them, he showed them very clearly the contempt he had for them and his intention to pay them a visit on his return from Calcutta.
>
> Before his departure from Murshidabad, fearing perhaps that the three nations might support each other, or possibly acting in good faith, he summoned to the *Durbar* the French and Dutch native agents, told them of the resolution he had formed to drive the English out of Bengal, and at the same time asked what assistance he might expect from their Masters in his expedition.
>
> The Dutch agent, who apparently had his lesson all ready, hastened to reply that his Company was only mercantile, not constituted for making war ... but immediately added, and evidently to do us a bad turn, "Address yourselves to the French, they are very strong at Chandernagore, besides they are people who can never keep quiet, and would ask nothing better than to fight against the English ...." This reply far from producing the effect expected by the native agent, inspired Siraj-uddaula and his Durbar with the greatest contempt for the Dutch, which they showed by many marks of indignation, and at the same time gave them an advantageous idea of our nation, whose courage they know.[8]

In their own way and to great annoyance of the English, the French and the Dutch declined the Fort William authorities' request also for help against Siraj-ud-daula; and the Nawab proceeded to punish the English wholly depending on his own resources. According to Jean Law, he 'had 50,000 men, horse and foot before Cossimbazar'.[9]

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 20. [8] *Ibid.*, p. 21.
[9] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 168.

The story of the Nawab's march towards Calcutta may be interrupted for a while so that an account may be given of the negotiations for peace that were started afresh on his behalf. On the evening of 7 June, Khwaja Wajid's agent, Siva Babu, brought to Calcutta the three letters (in original) which the Nawab had written to his master. As has already been mentioned, these letters demanded fulfilment of three things, which did in no way curtail the privileges enjoyed by the Company since the time of Shah Jahan, nor did they interfere with the rights the English enjoyed in the territory under their feudal control. But again Drake and his council made no answer to the Nawab's demands; on the contrary he considered them, as he later said, an affront to the English Company which had brought, by its trade, prosperity to Bengal. This is what he wrote:

> The evening of the 7th June Soo Babboo, Coja Wazud's *duan*, came to Calcutta by order from his master and brought with him three original letters which Souragud Dowlet had wrote Wazud from Rajamaul, Muxadavad and in his way to attack us, translate of which letters will be annexed to this narrative and they are now particularly referred to the perusal thereof, convinced us that the Nabob had thrown off all regard for the prosperity of his provinces, and that he listened to no advice offered him by any of his prime ministers or principal merchants and *shroffs* as our destruction must inevitably bring on ruin to his country.[10]

Apparently Drake believed that the Nawab should meekly tolerate the abuse of the privilege of custom-free trade, the harbouring by the English authorities of important absconders, and what appeared to him warlike preparations!

On 10 June Siva Babu again visited Calcutta, with another letter from Khwaja Wajid. (This letter is not available in the archives; and it can be presumed that Drake tore it off.) What Drake told Siva Babu is, however, available from another source. In their letter dated 17 July 1756, to the Court of Directors, Watts and Collet say that when the Nawab reached Chinsura (about 15 June) with his army, Watts contacted Khwaja Wajid's manager (Siva Babu), and 'enquired of him what he knew' about Drake's attitude towards the Nawab; the manager replied 'that he was down several times in Calcutta, and that the last time he

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

was there he told the Governour the Nabob was marching down, to which he (Drake) answered that the sooner he (the Nawab) came the better, and that he (Drake) would make another Nawab, with other harsh expressions he (Siva Babu) was ashamed to mention'.[11] Wajid was, however, not deterred in his peace mission, and his next step was to send his manager (Siva Babu) again to Calcutta, from the next halt of Siraj-ud-daula's army at Ranna Ghat. This last attempt is recorded thus in Watts and Collet's letter:

> When the Nabob was at Ranna Ghat, which is about two days march from Hughley, Coja Wazeed his (Siva Babu's) master wrote him (Siva Babu) immediately to go to Calcutta, that he went as far as Bamagur (Baranagore) but there received a message from his gomastah in Calcutta not by any means to proceed.

The reason why Siva Babu was advised by his gumashta not to proceed to Calcutta was that the authorities of Fort William had 'confined' Omi Chand, who, it was suspected might betray them to the Nawab, and that if he (Siva Babu) came he would be treated 'likewise'.[12] Wajid had had considerable business dealings with the English Company, which were to their mutual benefit, and was anxious that the English should be saved from the impending disaster.

Once again the efforts for peace were renewed, and this time by Watts and Collet, who, as prisoners, were accompanying the Nawab's army on its march towards Calcutta. While they were 'opposite to Hughly', they sent a letter to Drake, through the Director of the Dutch settlement at Hugli, Adrian Bisdom, asking him that if he would send a proper emissary to the Nawab's camp, the quarrel might be settled 'for a sum of money.' But Drake again turned down the proposal, telling the Dutch Director, according to Watts and Collet, 'that after the disgrace the Company had suffered at Cossimbuzar by the taking of their factory and imprisoning their servants, they were resolved not to come to any agreement'.[13]

That peace emissaries came to him from time to time is admitted by Drake. He says in his narrative: 'The evening of the 7th June Soo Babboo, Coja Wazud's duan, came to Calcutta by order from his master and brought him three original letters which Souragud Dowlet had wrote Wazud from Rajahmaul, Muxadavad and in his

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 116. [12] *Ibid.*, pp. 116-17. [13] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

way to attack us.'[14] Drake says further: 'The 10th of June Coja Wazud's duan made us another visit from Houghly and presented a letter from his master to the Governour to this purport that with our approval he would have a meeting with the Nabob, who then was advanced to Kisnagur, and use his interest to stop his progress.' Drake also admits receipt of Watts and Collet's letter which they clandestinely sent from the 'opposite' side of Hugli.

In fact, Drake was not at all interested in the efforts seeking to reconciliate the Nawab, but in making preparations to meet the Nawab's attack, sure as he was that he would be able to repel and humiliate the invaders. On 7 June when Siva Babu was at Calcutta, persuading Drake,—on the same day news reached Fort William that Kasimbazar had been seized by the Nawab—the latter began putting the settlement on war footing. 'He,' says Tooke, 'by beat of drum, caused all the inhabitants of Calcutta, fit to bear arms, to be assembled; in order to form a body of militia, which was accordingly done the same evening.' Giving the 'next morning's' account, Tooke says: 'Two companys of militia were formed, one under the command of Captain John Zephaniah Holwell, and the other under Captain William Mackett.'

On 8 June Drake despatched a letter to the authorities at the Fort Saint George, acquainting them with the development, and summoning help from them:

> We have received authentick advices that his (the Nawab's) artillery and a considerable body of his forces are already on their way down. We are preparing everything in our power to make as vigorous a defence as possible, but as our garrison is extreamly weak we shall endeavour to amuse him and avoid coming to hostilities as long as we can in hopes of your sending us a sufficient reinforcement (when you know our situation) not only to repel those troops he may bring against this place; but to recover the Honourable Company's Factory at Cossimbuzar.[15]

On 10 June when Siva Babu was again on his visit to Calcutta, with his usual mission, Drake started a token offensive. According to his own version, he sent a party of fifteen soldiers by boat to Sukhsagar, half way to Hugli, with orders to make as much noise as possible. 'This,' Drake adds, 'caused a great alarm, as was in-

[14] Drake's Narrative dated 19 July 1756.
[15] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 13.

tended, to the people inhabiting the banks of the river, and the report flew that the English were on their way to attack Houghly.'[16] It was a bullying tactics, and was ridiculed when 2,000 of Nawab's cavalry, an advance party, 'arrived to the assistance' of the terror-stricken people.[17]

In the next day's account Tooke says:

> June 11th, the whole body of troops the town was able to furnish fit to bear arms, including the whole military and militia was 475 (Europeans and *topasses*); the number of Europeans being 235 (about 23 of which were afterwards obliged to attend the shipping they belonged to) were assembled on a green to the southward of the factory and after being divided into four divisions, were cantoned. . . . Messrs. Simpson and O'Hara, engineers, with a great number of *cooleys*, were employed throwing up a breastwork seven foot high and six wide, with a ditch twelve foot deep and nine wide, at the salt-petre *godowns*; another at the Court House, and another to the southward, a little without the Fossee; which being completely effected, without the least molestation were each of them supplied with two six pounders, and also with two field pieces (six pounders) and *chevaux de frizes,* and with a quantity of crows feet, &c. to strew on the grand roads where it was judged the attack would be made. All the narrow passes leading to the town, were also furnished with a ditch and breastwork, but not supplyed with cannon, and intrenchments were begun to be thrown up across the Park, with a revelin to defend the front gate of the factory, but had no time to finish them.[18]

On 13 June, Tooke goes on to say,

> . . . there was an order issued out to stop all Moors boats, and an order given to take two Moors ships lying a little way down the river, being just arrived, which was accordingly executed, and the *Prince George,* a ship belonging to (the) Madrass Establishment, in company with the *Dodley,* the *Lively* ketch, and *Neptune* snow, which were taken in the Company's service (as many other vessels were) were sent to Mucka Tanna, to demolish the fortifications there. About noon they sett sail, and in the evening landed what men they had, who entered the fort without opposition, and

[16] Drake's Narrative, dated 19 July 1756, Hill, *Ibid.,* p. 136.
[17] *Ibid.* [18] *Ibid.,* pp. 254-5.

spiked seven guns they found there; six of which they threw in the river.[19]

This adventure was, however, undone by the Nawab's men on the next day. To quote Tooke again:

> But the 14th about eleven o'clock in the morning, the enemy, about 3 or 4,000, advanced with great precipitation to the fort, which obliged what men we had landed to take to their boats; the enemy took immediate possession of the fort, and fired very smartly with their small arms from the parapets, as also from two field pieces they had planted behind some bushes.[20]

Thus by an offensive action did Drake answer the moves for conciliation. Let Drake himself describe what happend on 14 June onward:

> Frequent alarms of the near approach of the enemy made us resolve to make as clear a passage as we could to oppose the attack, for which purpose we set fire to all the straw houses within our Lines, which fire spread itself to a much greater distance. Our *cooleys, lascars* and servants now deserted us.... Great resolution was still shewn by every individual and we were as we thought sufficiently prepared to hold out against the Moors until we could have further supplies of men and amunition from the Coast, which we expected to arrive about the 10th August, though we should be obliged to keep the fort, having lain in a quantity of rice, wheat and biscuit with other provisions under our commands within the Lines.
>
> To the period of time the 16th of June at half past one in the afternoon we were not disturbed with the noise of our enemies' cannon, when we received an alarm that an advanced party of the enemy, consisting of 4,000 men and some artillery, were attempting a passage at Baagbazar and that they had raised a battery of eight pieces of cannon to play on the redoubt. On this advice it was thought proper to reinforce Ensign Pacard's party and accordingly a detachment under the command of Lieutenant Blagg with two field pieces were ordered to march to his relief with the utmost expedition. The cannon of the enemy played chiefly on one of the two sloops which lay before the redoubt and killed five men. On the approach of our

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 255-6. [20] *Ibid.*, p. 256.

field pieces the enemy soon ceased their firing, attempting only to gaul us with their musquetry by keeping themselves concealed behind bushes and as little exposed as possible. Here we lost Mr. Thoresby one of the Volunteers and three European soldiers who had advanced beyond the redoubt. Before dark the enemy was entirely drove off and retreated to the eastward on which Captain Clayton was detached with a small party to cover the retreat of Lieutenant Blagg.

Later, Drake goes on to say, they were informed

... that the Nabob was himself about two miles distance and intended to make his general attack on Friday the 18th of June it being esteemed by the Moors a lucky day in the Ramzan which was at this season, to which superstitious notions those people pay the utmost regard.

In the morning of the 17th June large parties began to advance towards our northern and eastern batteries and indeed surrounded about two thirds of our Lines, advancing their cannon in the different avenues as they approached.... Before noon 4 or 500 of the enemy entered into that part of the town inhabited by our black merchants setting fire all about and plundering what they could find, committing most horried cruelties.

This evening every person repaired to the stations allotted them and advanced centinels were placed to prevent a surprize from the Moors. Crow feet were ordered to the three batteries to be thrown on the road where we expected an advance of horse and things remained quiet after eight this night until the morning following, the 18th of June, when about sunrise we had notice that the enemy's army had divided themselves into three bodies in order to make three attacks, the first was on our northern battery and which was repulsed after a quick fire from our cannon and musquetry during the space of two hours, when the enemy had lost a number of their men. The second was made on the Goal where they advanced with two pieces of cannon, eighteen pounders, on which Monsieur Le Beaume was reinforced with an Ensign and ten volunteers, when he drew out his two small guns to oppose their coming on, but was obliged to retire to his post forthwith....

The Goal being evacuated by our people the Moors immediately took possession thereof.... From these their possessions they kept so hot and continued a fire on our eastern battery

and on the houses we had pretended to guard as to force those small parties to quit their station and retire to Captain Clayton and Holwell their command. The enemy lost no advantage having thrown in great numbers between the houses of Messrs. Margas and Minchin, occupying every place which could command the eastern battery, and they were so well covered from every quarter that the cannon there could not annoy them and they stood the fire of our field pieces and small arms with great resolution. In order to batter the houses where the Moors were lodged an eighteen pounder was brought up from the fort and we were put to the shift of drawing up this large cannon by the aid of the militia, the *cooleys* having deserted. With the fire of this cannon the Moors were drove out of some of the houses and numbers of them were killed, but the house being so numerous and each of them possessed by the enemy there was no possibility of silencing the continued fire they kept on the eastern battery which on the contray hourly increased. The factory was annoyed from nine in the morning until the close of the evening with cannon shot, partridge, and fire arrows from the enemy, during which time the fort fired their cannon and threw cohorn and mortar shells from the bastions and rampart commanding the eastward part of the town, which was found to do execution at the Goal and several of the houses, and once a shout was heard that the Nabob's forces had retired from that quarter being drove in great numbers out of the Playhouse, which was again soon filled with people.

At break of day, the 19th June, things were found in as dreadful a situation as was expected....

At sunrise we perceived that a numerous body of the enemy were advancing on us from the eastward, they had in the night taken shelter of the battery quitted by Captain Clayton and had mounted cannon thereby.... It was now confidently affirmed that the enemy were attempting to force our barriers which would give them possession of the whole part of our parade by the water side.... At the close of day the Dockhead, Company's House and Mr. Cruttenden's appeared in flames and so great was the fire and smoke that the fort could not be distinguished. In the night flames were perceived throughout the town.[21]

On 19 June, Drake, overwhelmed with the consequences of

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 144-59.

defeat, which to him appeared certain now, escaped for life with some of his colleagues, without taking leave of other members of the Council. His place was taken by Holwell, and the rest of the story may be told in the words of the latter:

> About 9 this morning (June 19) our President Mr. Drake, Commandant Minchin, Mr. Macket 2nd Captain of the Militia, Captain Grant, Adjutant General, Mr. O'Hara, Lieutenant of the Train, privately withdrew out of the back gate, desert all the factory and embarked on board the shipping, which immediately weighed and stood down the river without leaving us a single boat at the *got* or possibility of making a general retreat and this before any one attack had been actually made on the fort.... After the President's desertion from Council I had hardly gone round the ramparts before the enemy attacked the fort incessantly the whole remainder of the day from their batteries and small arms; of the former from the battery we had raised at the Court House, from another they had erected in Mr. Allsop's Compound between the Court House and the jail, from a third erected at the south-west corner of the Park, from a fourth in the Reverend Mr. Bellamy's Compound and from a small battery they had raised at the Dock Head. They fired so wildly from their batteries they would not have made a breach in a twelve month though they fired from 18 pounders, but their small arms from the house round us, particularly the Company's, Captain Rannie's and Mr. Cruttenden's, annoyed us much, from whence we several times dislodged them with great slaughter and obliged them at least to set fire to them and to abandon them. The 19th at night our people had some recess but were obliged to sleep on their arms. The 20th in the morning the enemy formed three assualt at once against the north-west bastion, against the north-west *futtock* or barrier, and against the windows of the laboratory on the eastern curtain, and attempted to scale to the north-westward. From each of these assaults they were beat off with great loss to them before noon and a general cessation in a manner ensued for some hours, when finding we had 25 killed, and 70 or more of our best men wounded, and our train killed, wounded and deserted to all but 14, and not two hours ammunition left, we threw out a flag of truce towards the evening, intending to amuse the enemy and make the best retreat we could in the night to the Saint George, not then knowing that she was on a sand

opposite to Omichand's house. During the parley our back gate was betrayed to the enemy in concert—I judge—with some that had deserted the preceding night from the walls and those who had the guard of that gate, who were obliged to wrench off the locks and bolts, the keys being in my possession. In this situation we had nothing left to resolve on but a surrender at discretion.[22]

The story may be carried forward in the words of John Cooke:

Mr. Holwell, finding how things were circumstanced and how impracticable it would be to drive the enemy out of the Fort now that so many had penetrated within the walls, with the west gate of it open, and considering that further opposition would not only be fruitless but might be attended with bad consequences to the garison, he and Captain Buchanan delivered up their swords to a *jemmautdar* that had scaled the walls and seemed to act with some authority among the Moors. This example was quickly followed by every body, who threw down their arms and by that act surrendered themselves prisoners at discretion. The factory was in a few minutes filled with the enemy, who, without loss of time, began plundering everything they could set their hands on. We were rifled of our watches, buckles, buttons, etc., but no further violence used to our persons. The bales of broad cloth, chests of coral, plate, and treasure, laying in the apartments of the gentlemen who resided in the Factory, were broke open; and the Moors were wholly taken up in plundering till the *Subah* entered the Fort, which was a little after five in the afternoon, carried in a kind of litter.... Serajah Dowla seemed astonished to find so small a garison, and immediately enquired for Mr. Drake, with whom he appeared much incensed. Mr. Holwell was carried to him with his hands bound, and upon complaining of that usage, the Nabob gave orders for loosing his hands, and assured him, upon the faith of a soldier, that not a hair of our heads should be hurt.[23]

Expectations in the English camp were reversed. They had hoped that Arcot would be repeated in Bengal, and that they would be able to keep the final decision in abeyance until reinforcement would arrive from Madras. But unlike Arcot, Fort William gave

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 112-14.

[23] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 301.

way after barely three days' fighting. Victory seemed so certain that arrangements had been made in Fort William by some to dispose of the booty that would fall into their hands. Says Tooke in his narrative:

> Indeed could we have resisted the Nabob's forces till succours arrived to us from the Cormandel coast and Bombay, there must have been glorious plunder for some of our Gentlemen in Council, for those in particular of the natives who had received protection of our flag would have been made to pay for it, as also no small contributions raised round about the country; besides the plunder of the river would have been very sufficient to have made a few persons' fortunes as nothing could have passed and repassed but must have fallen into their hands; nay so sure were some of them of success against the Nabob (or at least appeared to be so) that vessells were fitted out to make prizes of the enemys ships homeward bound, two of which were taken, besides a considerable sum of money freighted on our vessells, from Surat and other places, was stopt; and though the Company had then in the river several small vessells that might have been sent on that expedition they were all put aside, and a vessell sent (which Mr. Drake purchased a very considerable part of) upon the expedition, that the whole plunder might be their own.[24]

After the surrender, some of the Englishmen were taken prisoner, and some allowed to go, and they took shelter at Fulta on the sea shore, which virtually became their settlement like Fort William, though without any privileges, business or trade.

Siraj-ud-daula now turned to deal with the Dutch and French who had declined his invitation to join him in his action against the English. From his subsequent behaviour it appears that he swallowed the refusal quietly only because he did not want to offend all the European powers lest they should form a joint front against him. But the refusal, amounting to disobedience of the order of a ruling prince, stuck in his throat, and the least he could do after his victory over the English was to demand from the Dutch and French contributions to the heavy war expenses he had incurred. Therefore, on 22 June, the Nawab sent the following letter to Adriaan Bisdom, the Director of the Dutch Company in Bengal:

[24] *Op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 288-9.

Chief of the merchants and harbinger of friendship Adrian Bisdom, Director for the Holland Company, live happy and contented!

I have too frequently written to you from Moorshedabad that you were to join your power to the King's army for the destruction of the wicked English by water, though your not doing so is of no account whatever, and you were asked only to put you to the test, for by God's blessing and help I am so strongly provided that I find myself able to exterminate ten such nations as these English, and if you wish to ensure the continuation of the Company's trade in this country, you will have to act in accordance with what I caused to be made known to you through my friend Faggeruttojaar, Choja Mhameth Wajed [Fakhr-ul-tujjar (chief of merchants) Khwaja Muhammad Wajid]; but in the contrary case, it will be all over with your trade in this *Soubaship*, which is a true warning conerning which you must know your own mind.[25]

Upon the receipt of this letter, the Director met Khwaja Wajid, who told him that the Nawab was 'extremely displeased' on the Dutch, like the French, refusing 'to assist him against the English'. The Khwaja repeated to the Director the sentiments the Nawab had expressed about the Dutch (in the Nawab's own words):

> I always thought that the Hollanders were more faithful to the King than that they would have caused him inconvenience about such trifling services as I have asked of them. I have rendered them a considerable service and been at great expense to put down their fellest business rivals, and, maybe, if the results of my enterprise had been in accordance with their wishes, I should have had to return disappointed from a bootless errand.[26]

As is recorded in the proceedings of an 'extraordinary meeting' of the Dutch Company, held on 26 June ('all present'), Raja Durlabh Ram 'and a few more of his trusted courtiers' informed the Dutch authorities 'that they were to bear in mind that' the Nawab 'had been put to heavy expenses and had to bear still more'.

The Nawab's demand amounted to Rs. 20 lakhs, and he communicated to the Dutch that if they did not pay the amount, 'I will ruin them as I have done the English'.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7 (from translations of Dutch records).

What happened next and the reaction of the Dutch may be told in the words of the Dutch themselves—from the part of the proceedings below:

> His Highness (the Nawab) had that morning sent his Master of Requests (evidently to add force to his exactions) to demand the delivery of our artillery and flags, and had already in anticipation seized upon our village whose inhabitants had already fled, so that it was everywhere crowded with horsemen, musketeers, navvies and other people; that if we were able to maintain good order and discipline we should give the Nawab more trouble than the English had, but that our besiegers counted at least seventy thousand armed men, with better artillery than ours and amply provided with good gunners and all kinds of war ammunition and that we could not possibly hold out against them, and even granting we were able to stand a siege for some length of time, much more would be lost than gained, for that all our servants at Cassimbazaar, Patna and elsewhere would be exposed to the fury of the barbarian and the Company's assets in the respective factories and in the Mint, as well as those deposited at the quarters and the moneys in circulation to the amount of about 46 *lacs* of rupees (or 70 tons of treasure) would be lost in such a case; not to mention that if things turned out adversely our honour would be impaired, our credit broken and probably not fifty lacs of rupees would suffice to make good the damage done to the Company, if besides the assets now here we consider what a heavy expenditure would be required for us to be readmitted and to reestablish ourselves, without our even then possessing the conveniences that we have painstakingly acquired here and at the branch factories in process of time.[27]

That the Dutch were conscious of the offence of their refusal is clearer from the following extract from the letter (dated 5 July 1756) of the Dutch Council, Hugli, to their Supreme Council, Batavia:

> Having been repeatedly written to by the Prince for assistance in soldiers, ammunition and boats, he on our absolute refusal, immediately after the taking of Calcutta, surrounded us with immensely superior forces, and demanded a contribution of 20

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 28-9.

lakhs or 2,000,000 rupees, a claim which we could not satisfy and would sooner have trusted ourselves to die fighting. In the meantime Heaven shewed us a way out of the difficulty so that we, by the expenditure of certain money, brought influence to bear upon that mad Prince, so as to incline him in our favour. By this means we obtained a modification to one fifth of the whole, or four *lakhs* of rupees. Having gained ground thus far we imagined that some more might be abated, or that in the matter of the *nazarani*, which one is ordinarily obliged to pay to all new Viceroys, we might get off with about half a *lakh* instead of one or two *lakhs*, but the Prince, seeing our secret joy and flattering himself that he had a right to chastise us, commanded the people with him to forcibly take away our artillery and trample our flag under foot. Now there was no further time for delay, we must either pay or take the consequences.[28]

Consequently a bond for Rs. 4.5 lakhs was drawn up, but on the Nawab demanding cash which he needed badly, a loan from a banker was taken out, and the demand of the Nawab satisfied.

The French, who also gave the Nawab cause of offence but who cleverly managed to be friendly with him, got off with a smaller payment—Rs. 3 lakhs 'besides another half *lakh* for mediation money'.[29]

Now the only place of importance left to the English was their factory at Dacca, with Richard Becher as its chief. That factory had planned to resist as is evident from the following extract from the 'Dacca Consultations', 27 June 1756:

> Notwithstanding the disadvantage of our situation, the smallness of our garrison &c. we were determined to defend ourselves to the utmost had we been attacked while Fort William continued in the hands of the English, and to enable us to do it we had planted what guns we had to the best advantage and with the assistance of the soldiers thrown up breast-works &c., and privately procured an additional quantity of powder.[30]

But the news of the loss of Calcutta compelled them to change their mind, and when Siraj-ud-daula's deputy at Dacca, Dasarath Khan, sent word to the factory, through a member of the French factory, demanding surrender of the English factory, Becher and

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5. [29] *Ibid.*, p. 56. [30] *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6.

his colleagues readily agreed. The 'Dacca Consultations' dated 28 June give the following account of the surrender:

> This morning Monsieur Fleurin, the French Second, came to our factory to acquaint us that he had been with Dusseraut Cawn our Nabob endeavouring to procure us the most favourable terms he could, but that all he was able to obtain, was, that the factory should be delivered up directly, the soldiers lay down their arms, and be carried prisoners to the Nabob,[31] the ladies go out in pallanquins to the French factory, the pallanquins not to be searched on Monsieur Fleurin's giving his word that nothing should be in them but the cloths the ladies had on. As to the Chief &c. Company's servants, the Nabob demanded that they should first be brought to him, and afterwards go to the French factory, Monsieur Courtin giving his parole to the Nabob that we shall wait the orders of Surrajah Dowlat in regard to our future fate. Taking these proposals into consideration, we think them very hard, but as Monsieur Fleurin assures us that very little alteration can be expected, Agreed that we beg Monsieur Fleurin to endeavour to save us the disgrace of going to the *Durbar*, and obtain permission that we go directly to the French, also that the soldiers may not be ill used. This he promises to endeavour to obtain and to return in the afternoon.
>
> The 28th June in the afternoon Monsieur Fleurin returned and acquainted us he had obtained permission for the gentlemen to go to the French factory without going to the *Durbar*, and that the Nabob had promised the soldiers should not be ill used or put in irons. We then gave our paroles to the French Chief, gave up our military prisoners to the Nabob's people and are now with sorrowful hearts leaving our factory, being permitted to carry off nothing but the cloaths upon our backs, having still this satisfaction left, that we have to our utmost discharged our duty to our Honourable Employers.[32]

Having thus smashed the English pride, and brought other Europeans under his complete control, Siraj-ud-daula returned to his capital, Murshidabad, leaving Manik Chand, as his governor at Calcutta, which city he renamed as Alinagar, perhaps after the name of his grandfather, Alivardi Khan.

[31] Dasarath Khan. (In this record 'Nawab' is used for him, and not for Siraj-ud-daula.)
[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Spies at Work: Return of the English

On 30 June 1756, ten days after the fall of Calcutta, Siraj-ud-daula sent a letter to George Pigot, governor of the English settlement in the South, Fort Saint George, apparently expecting negotiations for reconciliation to be started from that centre of the English trade. The letter said:

> Directore Pigot, of high and great rank, and greatest of the merchants, May you be possessor of the *Patcha's* favour.
>
> It was not my intention to remove the mercantile business of the Company belonging to you from out of the *subah* of Bengal, but Roger Drake your *gomasta* was a very wicked and unruly man and began to give protection to persons who had accounts with the *Patcha* in his *Koatey*. Notwithstanding all my admonitions, yet he did not desist from his shameless actions. Why should these people who come to transact the marcantile affairs of the Company be doers of such actions? however that shameless man has met with the desert of his actions and was expelled this *subah*.[1]

Pigot gave a bullying reply which came after several months (because of the distance between Bengal and Madras), and in the mean time the English at Fulta made that place their base for future operations. An attempt was made soon after the arrival of the men of Fort William at Fulta to open negotiations for a settlement with the Nawab, but these were not pursued in the belief that the Nawab would now insist on humiliating terms under which English trade might not prosper. On 6 July, Drake and other members of the Fort William Council sent from Fulta the following letter to Watts and Collet, who had settled at the French factory of Chandra Nagar after their release from the custody of the Nawab on or about 28 June:

> We congratulate your safety at Chandranagore. In our situation

[1] *Bengal & Madras Paper*, Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I., p. 196.

we are to expect from you who have been so long in the Nabob's camp the most certain account you are able to transmit us of the Nabob's determination respecting the English Company, and what effect you imagine an application to his principal ministers and great men would have in our favour, for which purpose we should be glad you would let us know who would be the properest persons to address to. We are advised that Monickchund, Roy Doolob, Golam Hassein Cawn and Coja Wazeed are those who have the greatest influence, and in consequence of that information we forward you enclosed letters for those officers, and desire you will endeavour to have an exact translation of them made into the Persian language and get them delivered with the original. If you think it would be proper to apply to any other Durbar officers upon this occasion, we request you will point out the persons, or (if you judge it will answer the end) we should be glad you would address them yourselves in behalf of our Honourable Employers to interest them in our favour. In hopes of opening a correspondence with the Government, we have absolutely forbid any hostilities being committed on any Moors' ships or vessels which may arrive in the river, or giving any offence to the country people round about us, by which pacifick measures on our side, we hope for a favourable turn of affairs.[2]

The letter written by Drake and his colleagues for Khwaja Wajid and other 'personages' connected with the court said:

> Relying on your favour and friendship for the English nation, we take the liberty of addressing this letter to you and intreat the honour of your aid and assistance in our present situation. We hope by your means to be informed in what manner we may address the Nabob for his permission to re-establish our Settlement at Calcutta.
>
> To whom can we apply in our present circumstances but to those from whom we have received many marks of favour and protection and on whom we still depend.
>
> Having no *Munsee* with us, we are obliged to address you in English, and hope, Sir, you will for that reason excuse any defect in our stile or omission of the due forms of respect. What can we say more? but that we hope much from your aid and favourable representation of the English to the Nabob.[3]

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 57-8. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Watts and Collet, considering it a very belated effort and declining to accept any longer the authority of Drake, refused to pass on to Khwaja Wajid and others the letters which had been sent for them. Their argument was, as they put forward in their reply to Drake dated 8 July:

> Should the Nabob think fit to permit the English to return and resettle we are afraid it would be not only with the loss of all their privileges but on such shameful terms that Englishmen we hope will never consent to. And we likewise think that after your Honour and the majority of you had quitted Fort William, which still held out, your power as a Governor and Council from that moment ceased and we are of opinion that you have no authority to indemnify us for acting by your orders in case your future measures should not be approved of by our Honourable Masters. For the above reasons we have declined delivering the letters you sent us.[4]

But Watts and Collect sent a seriously worded letter to Fort Saint George (on 7 July 1756) enclosing with it a copy of Drake's letter. In that letter they said:

> We shall do all in our power to get permission to reestablish the Settlement but are without any hopes of obtaining it during the life of the present Nabob. We therefore know of no other method but that of a military force which we hope your Honour &c. will be able to send sufficient to attack the Nabob even in his Metropolis, as we hear a peace is confirmed with France.[5]

When Drake and his council at Fulta expressed their resentment against Watts and Collet's refusal to deliver their letters to the Indian 'personages', the latter consented to comply with the request.[6] They employed the good offices of the Dutch Director Bisdom, and gave the following account (in their letter dated 17 July 1756, to the Court of Directors) of what transpired consequently:

> Accordingly Mr. Bisdom sent his secretary with the letters for the fore mentioned persons, and who also acquainted Coja Wazeed with the desire, the English had of being reestablished

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 61. [5] *Ibid.*, pp. 58-9. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

in Calcutta, to which Coja Wazeed replyed, that as the letters were wrote in English and only signed they would have no force, therefore it was necessary to have them translated into Persian and sent down to Mr. Drake to have his seal put to them when he would deliver them to the respective people, except Golam Hossein Cawn, who is turned out of the Province. Seree Babboo [Siva Babu] said he had orders from his Master Coja Wazeed to tell Mr. Watts to write to Mr. Drake that he would deliver his letters agreeable to his desire, but he imagined if the Nabob did so far comply with his request to admit the English into Calcutta, it would not be upon better terms than the Portuguese and Prussians trade on, which is to pay duties and hire houses and ware houses for themselves and goods, he likewise says that we must not expect to be put into possession of Fort William, and that Seree Babboo from his master ingenuously told Mr. Watts that the only method to re-establish Calcutta upon creditable terms would be to proceed to Madras and there concert measures with the Governour and Council, and to return with strength sufficient to enforce any petitions we had to make.

We must beg leave to observe here that Coja Wazeed's opinion entirely coincides with what we have already wrote you.[7]

The council at Fulta was itself of the view that even if reconciliation could be obtained, it would not restore in their entirety the privileges the English had enjoyed in Bengal before the fall of Calcutta. Therefore, even before it expressed its resentment to Watts and Collet for their refusal to deliver their letters to Indian 'personages', it had despatched a letter to Fort Saint George asking for military help and saying that the effort at reconciliation was intended to keep the Nawab in good humour. (This letter is dated 13 July while the reply of Watts and Collet, undertaking to effect delivery of the letters to the Indians, is dated 14 July and their letter to the Count of Directors, from which the above extract is quoted, is dated 17 July. In its letter dated 13 July to Fort Saint George, the Council said:

You will support us with the whole force you can obtain on your Coast, military and marine, together with a sufficient quantity of ammunition, cannon and all other warlike stores, military and marine, which may enable us to re-establish our-

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 117-18.

selves in these provinces, which we esteem of the most essential consequence to the East India Company and trade of India in general. . . .

We are at present endeavouring to open a correspondence with the principal men, whom we are informed the Nabob attends to, in hopes to bring on a treaty until we can obtain succour; and that we may in some measure be relieved from our present distress, being in the utmost want of all necessties of life, and strict orders issued by the Government not to supply us with any provisions.[8]

At that time (middle of July), Fort Saint George knew nothing of the misfortune that had overtaken the English Company's establishments in Bengal, and was only considering the three letters from Fort William—the first dated 25 May, the second dated 4 June and the third dated 7 June apprising it of the situation as it was developing consequent on the Nawab's threat. On the first letter, the Fort Saint George council took this decision, in its 'Public Consultations', dated 14 July: '. . .it is highly necessary we should send them as large a reinforcement as we can possibly spare and also some musquets which they are in great want of.' The proceeding relating to the second is as follows:

The second dated the 4th June acquainting us that since the date of their last they had been and are still involved in a dispute with the country Government occasioned by the Nabob's taking umbrage at their repairing and strengthening their line of guns towards the river, and that by letters from Cossimbuzar, copies of which they send us, they are afraid matters will be carried to extremities, the Nabob having stationed a party of horsemen round that factory and seeming much exasperated. That should they be attacked they are resolved to repel force by force, and to that end desire we will send them as soon as possible all the recruits we have detained from them, or at least a reinforcement of 500 men with a proportionable quantity of arms and stores, which if we neglect doing they deem themselves no ways responsible for what may happen. That they think it advisable we should communicate this to Admiral Watson.

(Decided that two Companies be sent to Bengal under command of Major Kilpatrick.)[9]

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 71-2. [9] *Ibid.*, pp. 96-7.

And about the third the proceedings say:

> The third is dated the 7th June acquainting us that the Nabob had ordered a considerable Party with a large Train of Artillery to march down the River, that they were actually on this side of Cossimbuzar, and that all Communication was cut off from that Factory, from which they apprehend his Designs extend further than is known and therefore entreat us to send a Re-inforcement without the least delay. In a Postscript they advise us of the surrender of Cossimbuzar, and refer us for Particular to Copies of Letters from thence which they enclose.[10]

About the operative part of the council's resolution, the following is recorded in the 'Fort Saint George Select Committee Consultations', dated 14 July:

> The President acquaints the Committee that upon intelligence received last night from the Governor and Council of Fort William of dangerous disturbances raised in Bengal by the new Nabob, it was resolved in Council this morning to send thither a re-inforcement of 200 men under the command of Major Killpatrick.[11]

Major Killpatrick had resigned from the Company's service 'and resolved on going home', but 'being ready and desirous at all times to shew his inclination to serve the Company' and to show 'gratitude for the favours received', he agreed to take the command.[12]

Killpatrick arrived at Fulta at the end of July, and apprising the council at Fort Saint George of the difficulties of starting operations against the Nawab at once, observed:

> The place and situation we are in renders it extremely unhealthful, and I am sorry to hear that it will be but more so as the season advances. Yet I don't believe we well can move from this, till we have had advices from you; for I am informed that both sides of the river downwards, and a good way up, are so entirely swamps and *paddy* fields that it would be impossible to keep the people on shore: and to attack the enemy at present, though we were even sure to make ourselves masters of Calcutta,

[10] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*
[11] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 99.
[12] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*

would be to no manner of purpose in the world, if you are not in a condition to send us large supplies of, in short, everything.[13]

In their letter dated 18 August, the council at Fulta emphasised what Killpatrick had written earlier:

Major Killpatrick and the detachment under his command joined us on the 31st ultimo. Had his reinforcement arrived before the loss of our Settlement, it might have been of great use in defence of the place; but in our present situation we cannot pretend to undertake anything with so small a force and without cannon, for which reason we flatter ourselves your Honour &C. will comply with the request we have made ... for assisting us with a sufficient force both military and marine.[14]

The authorities at Fort Saint George were as anxious as the council at Fulta about how to retake Calcutta, but delayed the sending of reinforcement on the advice of Admiral Charles Watson [Commander of the English Government's sqadron in India] whose help it had sought. Watson's reason was similar to Killpatrick's:

And having further considered this expedition, I am apt to think, if it is delayed, till the last week in next month, there will be a much greater probability of success attending it then if the ships were to proceed immediately, as they will then escape the rainy season, which is allowed by every body to be the most unhealthy part of the year, and in all appearance, if the ships were to go now, one-third of the men would fall sick before there would be an opportunity of doing any service.[15]

A question might be asked, why did the Nawab allow the English to stay on at Fulta? The answer is provided by Luke Scrafton (third in the English council of the Dacca Factory), Jean Law (chief of the French establishment at Chandra Nagar), and William Took (of Fort William). 'It may appear a matter of wonder,' says Scrafton, 'why the *Soubah* permitted us to remain so quietly at Fulta till we were become formidable to him, which I can only

[13] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 193 (Letter dated 5 August 1756).
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 197.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 206 (Watson's letter dated 25 August 1756 to the Fort Saint George Council).

account for from his mean opinion of us ... and had no idea of our attempting to return by force.'[16] Scrafton's suggestion is elaborated by Jean Law thus:

> Siraj-ud-daula had the most extravagant contempt for Europeans; a pair of slippers, said he, is all that is needed to govern them. Their number, according to him, could not in all Europe come up to more than ten or twelve thousand men. What fear then could he have of the English nation which assuredly could not present to his mind more than a quarter of the whole? He was therefore very far from thinking that the English could entertain the idea of re-establishing themselves by force. To humiliate themselves, to offer money with one hand and receive joyously with the other his permission to re-establish themselves was the whole project which he could naturally suppose them to have formed. It is to this idea, without doubt, that the tranquillity in which he left them at Fulta is due. I think also that he must have felt the advantage of keeping in his kingdom this commercial people; but as he also knew that the English had at least as much interest in re-establishing themselves as he in keeping them, it is certain that he supposed that the English would at last come and bend their necks to his yoke.[17]

And the following is Tooke's account who was on the spot—at Fulta:

> Upon our first arrival at Fulta we found provisions and necessarys very scarce, though soon after, upon the Nabob's hearing (as is reported) that the ships intended leaving the river, ordered the *buzars* or markets to be opened, that he might prevent our plundering and get rid of us the sooner, and as the country was farmed by Monickchund the Nabob's *duan* (who was appointed President at Calcutta after it was taken) he directed the *buzars* to be continued, as long as we stayed at Fulta, when we had plenty of everything; indeed the *buzars* were stopped once or twice, owing to the gentlemen's [Englishmen's] stopping a parcell of salt boats, but upon their being cleared, again, we got provisions as usual.[18]

Strict secrecy was being maintained of what the English were

[16] *Reflections*, p. 58
[17] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III. p. 176
[18] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 301.

doing at Fulta, secret arrangements were made to obtain information of what was happening in the Nawab's country, and mercy was excited in the hearts of the Nawab and his leading men towards the distress of the men at Fulta. Hill says that 'to deceive the Nawab, who might be supposed to have been alarmed at the news of his arrival, Major Killpatrick had already been instructed on the 15th [August] to write and assure him that the British did not bear malice for what had happened in the past, and to ask a supply of provisions'.[19] We get a little glimpse of the rest from an Armenian merchant, Patras Arratoon's letter [dated 5 January 1759] to the Court of Directors:

> The calamaties and condition the English familys were in on board their ships at Fulta I need not describe, no doubt but the Honourable Company have had a very particular account of their dilemma and sufferings; I shall proceed to relate how far their deplorable state made impressions on one Abraham Jacobs (a Jew) and myself. The said Abraham Jacobs applyed himself to me with a prospect to join him to endeavour to contribute the English some relief. A proposition of that commiseration and humanity I readily came into, solemnly plighted him my faith to yield them my utmost assistance with all imaginable alacraty, fervency, and fidelity, even to the hazard of my life. Upon this Abraham Jacobs remained in my house at Calcutta disguised in Moor's habit.... The first thing we effected was to obtain the country people to bring provisions to Fulta market which they were restrained from before.... We then proceeded to advise Major Kilpatrick to send a letter to Monickchund Governor of Calcutta which he did and we delivered (it to) him and were so happy to have him receive it favourably, and returned an answar. This success spirited us to advise the Major to write to Coja Wazeed and Jugut Seat [Jagat Seth, the banker], and we carried these letters to Hughly and delivered them to the said Coja Wazeed and Jugut Seat's *gomasters*, and returned with satisfactory answers to the Major. The good consequences of these correspondences was the obtaining a cessation of hostilitys or disturbances of the Moors towards the English, which continued till the arrival of his Majesty's Squadron.[20]

To return to Fort Saint George, the rains were by now over, and preparations having already been completed, ships laden with men,

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. cxiv-v. [20] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 364-5.

money and ammunition were despatched in the middle of October. The following extract from the Fort Saint George council's letter dated 13 October 1756 to Clive gives an idea of the force:

> We have embarked on the several ships of the squadron, all officers included, 528 military and 109 Train, and on the Company's ships *Walpole* and *Malborough* and those on board His Majesty's ships 940 *sepoys* and 160 *lascars* with twelve field-pieces, and a necessary quantity of ammunition, and reposing full confidence in your abilities we have appointed you to be Commander-in-Chief of the land forces to be employed on the present expedition.[21]

Both the councils at Fulta and Fort Saint George were averse to securing restoration of the English trade without the privileges the Company had enjoyed for over a hundred years and, under the new *farman* of Farrukh-siyar, since 1717. And they believed that if the demand for restoration was backed by force, and more than that by show of force, the Nawab might be coerced into agreeing to the old privileges. The council of Fort Saint George, therefore, gave this advice to the Englishmen at Fulta:

> Should the Nabob on the news of the arrival of these forces make offers tending to the acquiring to the Company the before mentioned advantages, rather than risque the success of a war, we think that sentiments of revenging injuries, although they were never more just, should give place to the necessity of sparing as far as possible the many bad consequences of war, besides the expence of the Company's treasures, but we are of opinion that the sword should go hand in hand with the pen, and that on the arrival of the present armament, hostilities should immediately commence with the utmost vigour. These hostilities must be of every kind which can either distress his dominions and estate or bring reprizals into our possession.[22]

It was now, and by employing the same diplomacy, that Pigot (Chief of Fort Saint George) sent a bullying reply (dated 14 October 1756) to the Nawab's letter dated 30 June. The reply said:

> I received the letter you were pleased to write me on the 30th

[21] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 233.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 239 (Letter Dated 13 October to the council at Fulta).

of June, advising me that it was not your intention to remove the mercantile business of the English Company out of the *subah* of Bengal, and at the same time I received information that all the Company's factories in the said province with their effects, amounting to several *kerows* had been seized by your people, also the effects of all the merchants who resided in the said Settlements amounting to a great many *lacks* more, and I was further informed that the greatest part of the merchants were killed by your people in a cruel and barbarous manner beyond what can be described in writing. I must inform you that the English have above all other nations enriched your province by a most extensive trade and the importation of immense sums of ready money. The *Mogul* was so sensible of the many advantages of our settling in Bengal that he has given us by his *phirmaunds* his protection together with many privileges and indulgences in all parts of his dominions, and these privileges and indulgances the English have enjoyed from that time to this, according to the intent of the royal *phirmaund*. Indeed in Bengal the *Subahs* did not comply with the royal *phirmaund* but out of thirty-two villages given us by the King suffered us to possess but three, and moreover have often on trifling pretences taken large sums of money from the Governors of Bengal. However as it was the intent of the English to live peaceably and only to follow their trade in your province, they submitted and made no disturbance. All that the *Subahs*, your predecessors, have done is nothing in comparison to what you have lately done. I should have been willing to have believed that the violence and cruelties exercised by your army against the English was without your knowledge, but I find you commanded your army in person and after killing and murdering our people took possession of the Fort. The great commander of the King of England's ships has not slept in peace since this news and is come down with many ships, and I have sent a great *Sardar*, who will govern after me, by name Colonel Clive, with troops and land forces. Full satisfaction and restitution must be made for the losses we have sustained. You are wise: consider whether it is better to engage in a war that will never end or to do what is just and right in the sight of God: a great name is obtained by justice as well as by valour. You have heard that we have fought and always been victorious in these parts. The Nabob of this province writes you how much we have assisted in his affairs, and always acted in support of the orders

of the King of Delly. Salabad Jung asked our assistance but we determined to obtain satisfaction in Bengal. Mr. Clive will explain all things to you. What can I say more?[23]

"Letters were sent at the same time to the Nawabs of Purneah, Dacca and Cuttack, asking their assistance.'[24]

The purpose of these letters was to create rivals to the throne of Bengal. The authorities of Fort Saint George clearly wrote to Fulta (in their letter dated 13 October) cited above saying: 'We need not represent to you the great effect a junction with any powers in the provinces of Bengal that be dissatisfied with the violence of the Nabob's Government, or that may have pretensions to the Nabobship.'

The atmosphere, just before the arrival of the Fort Saint George forces at Fulta, appeared as propitious as it was visualised in the above instruction, but the prospect was reversed. Shaukat Jang, Nawab of Purnea, who, in the month of May, had surrendered to the superior force of Siraj-ud-daula and accepted his authority over Bengal, now appeared to have received the Mughal *farman* from Delhi, appointing him Nawab in place of Siraj-ud-daula. In the then atmosphere of the Mughal Court at Delhi and virtual collapse of the Mughal power, the *farman* had practically no meaning, and could only be enforced by power that Shaukat Jang could muster. Shaukat Jang did not only gather together a substantial force, but also managed, by his secret agents, to create disruption in Siraj-ud-daula's army. Jean Law gives the following account of the disruption:

> Before the departure of the army from Murshidabad a plot was already formed, in which it is pretended that Mir Jafar, the *Bakshi*, was engaged and some of the chief *jemadars*. It had been decided that during the battle with the Nawab of Purneah, part of the army should remain inactive. Unfortunately Ramnarain, Governor of Patna, had taken no part in this plot. It was known that Siraj-ud-daula had written to him to come and join him, but it had been taken for granted that this Raja would make some excuse for not coming; so that they were surprised to see him arrive with all his troops which formed a second army. The conspirators were disconcerted. They might however have provided a remedy for this mishap if Saukat Jang had not himself sought his own destruction.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 241-3. [24] *Ibid.*, p. 243.

> The two armies were very close to each other. Saukat Jang was informed by his spies that Siraj-ud-daula was at the head of a body of horsemen whom he saw on an eminence. Excited by the appearance of his foe, and wishing to decide the fortune of the day with him single-handed, Saukat Jang quitted his army and with three or four hundred horsemen who formed his vanguard and precipitated himself on the enemy shouting, "It is the *Subadar* whom I seek," Mir Jafar, who commanded this detachment, in despair at the mistake hastened to reply that *Subahdar* was not there. It was too late. The fight had already commenced and in the melee Saukat Jang received a bullet which stretched him dead on the ground. The news gave as much surprise as joy to Siraj-ud-daula, who trembling at some hint of the plot that was hatching, was in his tent about a league away from the army.[25]

Jean Law leaves the story of the battle here; it has, therefore, to be completed with Dr. William Forth's account, which is identical with Law's. (Dr. Forth, a surgeon of the Company, formerly posted at the Kasimbazar factory, was now moving about collecting information from his Indian acquaintances and passing it on to Fulta. He got the information of the death of Shaukat Jang and the defeat of his army from Nasrat-ullah Khan and Fakir Muhammad, while he was at Chinsura. Forth says these two were men 'of distinction, great friends of the old Nabob'. The account is contained in Forth's letter dated 11 December 1756 to the Council at Fulta):

> Souragud Dowla was not in the engagement but about 6 miles off. He had dressed that day Jaffer Ally Khan's [Murshid Quli Khan] son like himself and sent him out with the best part of his army. This was what deceived the spies [of Shaukat Jang]. On the news of Shocutt Jung's death his army fled. Souragud Dowla marched on, took possession of the province and all Shocutt Jung's family prisoners, appointed Raja Mohonloll Governor and returned triumphant to Muxadavad, and to finish all has at last received his *phirmaund* from the King; it cost him two crore, two lack, 50,000 rupees.[26]

Malcontents in Siraj-ud-daula's army and court, however, remained, and the English, possessing knowledge of them and enjoying intimacy with them, won them over to their side. Three of them

[25] *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 174. [26] *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 53.

happened to injure his susceptibility by killing Shaukat Jang contrary to his instruction; (Siraj-ud-daula had issued orders that Shaukat Jang, who was his cousin, should not be killed, but taken prisoner). In the same letter, Forth gives the following description of the episode and how he turned it to the advantage of the English:

> He (Siraj-ud-daula) has discharged Omarkhan [Umar Khan or Umar Beg] and turned him out of his country, likewise Dunmahomet [Din Muhammad] and Golaum Shaw [Ghulam Shah], both of them considerable men, especially the former. They each claimed the credit of their people killing Shokut Jung in hopes of getting the reward formerly offered, but the Nabob told them that his orders was not to kill his brother, but to bring him alive that he might make a friend of him. As they had disobeyed his orders he would not take away their lives though they deserved it, but ordered them away immediately out of his country; that there was many more he intended to discharge, but believed he would defer it till he see how affairs went on a little first. I intimated if some of those he had discharged would not, if properly applied to, engage in our service; his answer was not to attempt it till we had once beat him, for none would be so rash to hearken to a proposal of this kind whilst things were in this situation; if we succeeded we then might have them, as they were souldiers of fortune and would take service wherever they had the first offer, he promised to write me by one of his people as soon as he arrives at Muxadavad and inform me what news. His advice to me was on no account to move upwards even if I could obtain the *Fouzdar's dustick*, but to wait a few days till I heard from him, for that if forces should be in the way down, I might be plundered and ill used.[27]

Though, to all appearance, the Company's men had virtually been exiled to Fulta, there was no restriction on individuals moving about in the country and even residing in Calcutta. According to an English sufferer's (Captain Mills) account, the Nawab had 'published an order signifying that the English might return to their houses'.[28] Upon this, Captain Mills and some others returned

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
[28] Captain Mills' account dated 10 August 1756, Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 194.

to Calcutta. The circumstances under which the Nawab's order was rescinded by the Governor of Calcutta, Manik Chand, are described thus by Mills: 'On the last (day) of June a drunken European sergeant killed a Moorman on which Monickchund, who was left Governor of Calcutta, issued an order that all the Europeans should quit the Settlement.'[29] However, the stay and movement of individual Englishmen in the country continued. Warren Hastings[30] was staying at Kasimbazar, procuring intelligence and passing it on to Fulta. The English factory at Balram-garhi was not disturbed by the Nawab's government, and not only did the men in charge of it continue to stay there, but in September even Holwell, with another companion, visited it.

Thus spying by Englishmen and on their behalf by Indian informers was facilitated by the Nawab's laxity born of the confidence that the English had been suppressed by him for all times.

There were some Indians who voluntarily helped the English. One of them was Govind Ram Mitra. During the Nawab's invasion of Calcutta, Mitra displayed considerable loyalty towards the English: he had lived under their protection for a long time. Drake, in his Narrative, makes the following mention about Mitra's part during the invasion:

> We should do injustice not to distinguish the spirit shewn by Govindram Metre who employed several hands at his part of the town by Baag Bazar in felling down trees and cutting through the roads to break the enemy's passage, stopped up the small avenues leading into our town, and destroyed many houses where the enemy might have obtained shelter.[31]

This Govind Ram Mitra, on the capture of Calcutta, was imprisoned by the Nawab's governor, Manik Chand. He was thus prevented from being of any further use to the English. But in December, he managed somehow to communicate with the English council at Fulta, 'and sent them information regarding the distribution of the native troops'.[32] In order that he might be of further use, the council advised him that he should offer to enter the service of the Nawab and thus regain his liberty.[33] This he did.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] At the time of the Nawab's attack in June, Hastings was posted at an *aurang* at Kasimbazar. He was arrested, but later released on the intercession of the French and Dutch, and allowed to remain in Kasimbazar.

[31] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I., pp. 139-40.

[32] Orme, Mss., India V, pp. 1159, 1160. [33] *Ibid.*

Six months had elapsed since the Nawab's victory at Calcutta. During this period, he never knew what the English designs were and how their spying was going on in his realm. He was completely at ease. The French had come to know in good time (early in October)[34] that the English would soon be receiving reinforcement from Madras, but they harboured ill-will towards the Nawab on account of the war levy he had collected from them, and kept the information from him.

On 15 December, Watson and Clive arrived at Fulta, with their ships laden with men and munition, and at once opened a new chapter of intrigues. The first thing Clive did was to address the following letter (15 December 1756) to Manik Chand, Governor of Calcutta:

> Upon my arrival in these parts from Madras I was informed that you had shown a great friendship and regard for the English Company, for which I write to return you thanks. I doubt not but as you have hitherto professed a desire to serve the Company, you will at this time, when their affairs most require it, retain the same disposition in their favour.[35]

No records are available as to what 'great friendship' Manik Chand had shown to the Company, and what 'desire' he had 'hitherto professed to serve the Company'. From Forth's letter dated 11 December, it appears that he had had contacts with Maink Chand. The two sentences in his letter referring to Manik Chand are: 'Monickchund is likewise called upon. He leaves Calcutta in a day or two.' Secret information those days was communicated orally, and now, to get at the truth, events and written words can only be interpreted. There are expressions in the written account which suggest, rather clearly, that Manik Chand was developing intimacy with the English at the cost of his fidelity to the Nawab. The correspondence reproduced below vindicates this suggestion. He made the following reply (19 December) to Clive's letter of 15 December:

> Your obliging and friendly letter I have received, which has given me the greatest satisfaction. Your great abilities and dignity

[34] Letter dated 8 October 1756 from M. Baussett to M. Le Marquis Dupleix, Hill, *ibid.*, p. 229.

[35] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Colonel Clive's Correspondence Military Sundry Book No. 10, 1756 to 1758).

I was before well informed of, and I sincerely rejoice to hear of your safe arrival in these parts. You tell me that you have heard of my regard and friendly inclinations for the welfare of the English Company: had there been another man among the English possess'd of your qualifications, their affairs would never have been in the condition to which they are now reduced. The causes of the misfortunes which had befallen the Company's settlements you will learn from their former agents. My conduct in them you must have already known, as well as my disposition for peace and quiet which I have solely in view. Your letter has determined me more than ever in the same sentiments, and in my desire of serving the Company which I shall continue to do to the utmost of my power. Radakissen Mullick, a man of trust whom I have sent to you, will impart to you some further particulars which I recommend to your attentive consideration, &c., of which you will make such use as will be most agreeable to the interest of the Company. To appease dissentions and to settle troubles are the duties of a great man: to raise combustions is the part of mean and bad dispositions.[36]

What confidential information was passed on to Clive orally one can only guess. Apparently it could not be written for fear of the letter falling into wrong hands, but certainly it was of 'such use as will be most agreeable to the interest of the Company'. (The sentence that follows can be dismissed as a device to obviate the preceding one being interpreted by an interceptor unfavourably.) To this letter, Clive made the following reply:

> I have receiv'd your friendly letter, and been very particularly acquainted by Radakissen of your intention to serve the Company in the advice you offer to terminate everything in a peaceable manner. I send you by Radakissen 3 letters to the Nabob Siraja Dowla, one from Salabut Jung, one from the Governor of Chinapatam, and one from myself; copy of the letter I enclose to you. After reading these letters it will be the Nabob's own fault if the troubles of this country should begin again, and, be worse than ever. I shall be very ready to listen to such terms as are consistent with the welfare, honor, and reputation of the Company and English nation, and I make no doubt, agreeably to the promise you have often made, that your interest

[36] *Ibid.*

will not be wanting at Court to settle all these things in peaceable way, which will gain you great honor. Write me often of your health.[37]

It is noteworthy that the letter Clive wrote for the Nawab and forwarded to Manik Chand for delivery to him (Nawab) was harsh and threatening, but the letters he addressed to Manik Chand were written in friendly, intimate and grateful terms. Below is the draft of the letter for the Nawab:

The occasion of my coming here you are already informed by letters from Nabob Sullabut Jung and Annaroody Cawn [Anwar-ud-din Khan] and from Governor Pigot. You have likewise heard, I make no doubt, that I have brought with me a larger military force than has ever appeared in Bengal. You will judge it therefore prudent both for your own interest and the welfare of your country to consider maturely how injuriously the English settled in the provinces under your jurisdiction have been treated by your people, their houses and factorys seized and detained, their effects to a large amount plundered, and *great numbers of the Company's servants and other inhabitants inhumanly killed*. These are acts of violence which I hope you do not approve of, and I expect you will take care to have them severely punished. Your power and personal bravery are universally known; my reputation in war is likewise established by being ten years continually in the field upon the Coast, in which time my undertakings have always been attended (by the blessing of Providence) with success; and I trust in God, that I shall be as fortunate in these parts. Should necessity oblige me to proceed to those extremitys one of us must (be) overcome, we cannot both be victorious and I leave you to reflect how uncertain the fortune of war is and whether it is your interest to risque so previous (? precious) a decision—to avoid it, you must make proper satisfaction for the losses sustained by the Company, their servants and *riots*, return their factorys and invest them in their ancient priviledges and immunities. By doing this piece of justice you will make me a sincere friend and get enternal honour to yourself, and save the lives of many thousands who must otherwise be slaughtered on both sides without any fault of their own. What can I say more?[38]

[37] *Ibid.* [38] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 71.

This letter Manik Chand considered incapable of serving the purpose it was desired to serve, and sent to Clive, with his letter dated 23 December, a humble, politely worded draft, befitting the position of the Nawab. Clive, whose primary object was to bully the Nawab, made some changes in it, but retained the element of threat. He gave the following reason to Manik Chand (letter dated 25 December) for retaining the stiffness of his first draft:

> I am very sensible of your friendship and kind intentions in sending me the letter which I have read, but am sorry, consistently with my duty to the Company or their honour, I cannot accept of your advice in writing to the Nabob a letter couch'd in such a style, which, however proper it might have been before the taking of Calcutta, would but ill-suit with the present time, when we are come to demand satisfaction for the injuries done us by the Nabob, not to entreat his favour, and with a force which we think sufficient to vindicate our claim.[39]

The letter that eventually went from Clive to the Nawab was worded by him as:

> Salabat Jung, the Nabob of Arcot and the Governor of Chinapatam have wrote to Your Excellency about our affairs, the Nawab of Arcot's letter is gone by a former conveyance. This note I send you by the means of Rajah Manickchund. Your Excellency will hear from others what force is come to Bengall, such a force was never seen before in your province. When Your Excellency comes to hear all these things and to consider seriously of them, I hope you will have so great a regard for yourself, for us, and for the trade of your province, as to give the Company full satisfaction for all the losses they have lately sustained by the taking of Cossimbazar, Calcutta, and all other factories belonging to the English in Bengall.
>
> I know you are a great Prince and a great warrior. I likewise for these ten years past have been constantly fighting in these parts, and it has pleased God Almighty always to make me successful, the like success may attend me in Bengall, it may attend Your Excellency. Why should the soldiers on either side run the risque of war, when all things may be made up in a

[39] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Colonel Clive's Correspondence Military Sundry Book No. 10, 1756 to 1758).

friendly manner by restoring to the Company and to the poor inhabitants what they have been plundered.[40]

According to Drake; this correspondence was carried on with a view to gaining time, and with the 'intention to amuse' the Nawab 'and prevent his re-inforcing the garrison at Calcutta during the delay of the Squadron at Fulta on account of the Spring Tides'.[41]

Calcutta had been in the possession of the British for a long time and had grown into a big commercial city. Hundreds of Indian merchants, benefitting by trade with the English, had developed vested interests, and wished that the Company should be re-established. With those resourceful among them, the men at Fulta re-established contacts and carried on correspondence, in which Clive too joined after his arrival. The following letter dated 26 December, from Clive to one Nazar Ali, is another example of how he was modest and considerate to the merchants who would in their own interest respond to the needs of the English, and bullying towards the Nawab, who might respond only out of fear:

It gives me great pleasure to hear by your vackeel that you are in health; at the same time I cannot help expressing my concern for your being so great a sufferer in these parts.

Your sufferings cannot be greater than those of the English; however (thank God) there is now a prospect of gaining ample satisfaction for all our lossess.

I shall always be ready to enter into any proposals that may be for your service, and beg you will fully explain to me what you think is proper to be done to that end.[42]

A boatman named Hubbo, in the service of Manik Chand, had been serving as a paid spy of the English and passing on information to them. His brother was employed by the English at Fulta as a courier between him and them. Hubbo demands, in a petition which he submitted to Drake after the English were again victorious, the sum of money agreed to be paid to him:

Your petitioner further sheweth that when his brother was employ'd by the English at Fulta several messages were sent or

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] Letter dated 26 January 1757 to the Secret Committee in England. *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*

[42] *Bengal & Madras Paper, op. cit.*, (Colonel Clive's Correspondence).

communicated to your petitioner by his said brother by order of the Honourable Roger Drake Esq., Mr. Hollwell, and Captain Wedderburn, with a promise of a reward of six hundred (600) rupees and *syr syrang* in the Honourable Company's service, on the retaking of this place from the Moors, if your petitioner would prevent the sinking any vessells in the channells about Tannah's Fort or any stoppages, so that there might be a free passage for his Majesty's ships to come up, which your petitioner had the good fortune to perform by, with about sixty rupees cost.[43]

While deluding Manik Chand with conciliatory correspondence, Clive was making preparations for an attack on the Baj-Baj fort. His last letter to Manik Chand, with which he enclosed a letter for Siraj-ud-daula, is dated 25 December; but in his letter (of the same date) to Killpatrick, he says:

> A violent cold and slight fever has reduced me to the necessity of committing to writing what otherwise I should have been glad to have executed in person and by word of mouth.
>
> I would have the two six-pounders and two three-pounders well supplied with ammunition and in readiness to land at a moment's warning, for I take it for granted we shall march from Bujee Bujee (Baj-Baj) to Calcutta by land. It would save us the trouble of embarking if we could do the same from Fulta. Please to speak to the Governor to give orders that the vessel which has the 100,000 musket cartridges on board accompany the squadron.
>
> I am very anxious for the return of the man who is sent to examine the situation of Bujee Bujee, a good account from him would save us a world of trouble. Pray make enquriy if there be any other road to Bujee Bujee except the footpath between the two fortifications.
>
> It would be singular service could you prevail upon the Bazar people to follow us to Bujee Bujee.[44]

On 29 December, the information about the 'situation' of Baj-Baj was received. It is not known whether it came to Clive from his own source or from any other source; it was conveyed to Clive by Watts. Watts said:

[43] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 346-7.
[44] *Op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 73-4.

I have received advice about half an hour ago from a *peon* that left Calcutta this morning, that he saw Monickchund on his march to Calcutta, at Mr. Pearkes's garden which is about half a mile on this side Surmonds, with about two thousand horse and foot and eight or ten pieces of cannon; the *peon* who brings this advice says he was in Tannas Fort, that no additional works were made to it or trench dug, and that there were not above one hundred and fifty men there; that opposite to Tannas there was nine guns with about fifty men, and before Tannas there was lying the *Prince Edward,* a bringantine and 2 sloops; few or no men are left in Calcutta. I thought it incumbent on me to send this as also the *peon* who brought it.[45]

So poor was the condition of the defences of the places under Manik Chand that it was heartening to the prospect of easy occupation of them by the English. On the same day (29 December), 'all the Company's troops'[46] ('276 of the King's troops, 616 of the Company's 1,048 *seapoys* and 260 *lascars*'[47] coming from Fort Saint George), sailed on board the English king's ships, *Tyger, Kent, Salisbury, Bridgwater,* and *Kingsfisher,* for their first engagement, and landed at Mayapur next morning. The forts (including Fort William) lay virtually undefended, the only substantial force of 2,000 being with Manik Chand, who, according to the information conveyed to Watts by his source, was marching with it towards Calcutta. Manik Chand's excuse for not strengthening the defences of Baj-Baj can be only his ignorance of the English design to begin their conquest with the capture of that fort. In any case it was on the way of the English march towards their destination that an skirmish took place between their forces and those of Manik Chand. The incessant fire of the former repelled the latter; according to Clive; Manik Chand 'himself received a shot in his *turban*'.[48] 'The skirmish,' according to *Journal of the Expedition to Bengal from October 13, 1756, to February 18, 1757,* 'lasted about half an hour, in which time' the British lost one officer, Ensign Charles Kerr, and nine private men killed and eight wounded.[49] The loss on the opposite side was estimated at 200 by the English. Tired out by this skirmish, the English were contemplating to launch their attack on Baj-Baj next day (31 December), and Clive ordered Captain (afterwards Sir Eyre) Coote to postpone it until next morning.

[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 76-7.
[46] *Op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 6.
[47] *Ibid.* p. 30.
[48] *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 98.
[49] *Op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 41.

But how ludicruously easy it turned out to occupy the fort that very night (30 December) is told by Coote in his *Journal*:

> While I was on board a sailor that was drunk stole away to the fort gate, and fired his pistol and cried out the place was his, upon which the King's (Captain King's troops), who were next the gate, entered the fort without any opposition; thus the place was taken without the least honour to anyone; we found the fort very strong, with a wet ditch all round it, and I had the honour to command it that night.[50]

On 31 December, the English soldiers continued their march by land throughout the day, and next day they captured Tanna Fort with much greater ease. Of this capture, Admiral Watson gives the following account:

> On the 1st January the *Kent* and *Tyger* anchored between Tanna Fort and a battery opposite, both which places the enemy abandoned as the ships approached. In these we found about forty guns, some twenty-four pounders, and all mounted on good carriages, most of them the Company's. We also found some powder and ball. In the night, I sent the boats manned and armed up the river, to set fire to a ship and some vessels that lay under a fort, which was executed without opposition. That was a necessary piece of service, as I heard they were filled with combustibles in order to be set on fire when the ebb made, to burn our ships.[51]

And about the capture of Calcutta the admiral had recorded thus:

> The next morning early, agreeable to the Colonel's request, I landed the Company's troops, who immediately began their march to Calcutta.... The *Tyger* being the leading ship, at forty minutes after nine o'clock the enemy began to fire upon her from their batteries below Calcutta, which they deserted as we approached. At twenty minutes past ten, the *Tyger* anchored abreast the Line of guns at Calcutta, at half an hour after ten the *Kent* anchored, and both ships made a very warm fire, insomuch that the enemy were soon drove from their guns and pre-

[50] *Ibid.*
[51] Letter to John Cleveland dated 31 January 1757, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 197.

sently after ran out of the Fort. Captain Coote with the King's troops and an officer from the *Kent* entered the Fort a little before eleven, but the flight of the enemy was so sudden that only two or three poor ignorant fellows were taken. I garrisoned the place that day with the King's troops and appointed Captain Coote to take the command. The next day I delivered it up to the Company's representatives with all the effects found within their bounds. Here we found four mortars, ninety one guns of different sizes and a considerable quantity of all kinds of ammunition: We have suffered very little from the enemy in our masts, yards and rigging, and have lost very few.[52]

An explanation must be found for the almost unopposed entry of the English into the forts of Baj-Baj and Tanna, and then into Calcutta. Manik Chand should have known through his spies that the English at Fulta had received reinforcement and were preparing for an attack. There is no room for doubt that Manik Chand knew of it, because even if his intelligence failed him, he got it from Clive himself in the letters cited above. Clive's letters, though seeking reconciliation, contained severe threat of force, and Manik Chand, who was either imprudent or had been bought over by the English, made no effort to strengthen his defences. Manik Chand's conduct had been mysterious throughout, and one feels inclined to suggest that he had allowed his loyalty to be tampered with. Some years later (in 1763) when the English Company awarded a suitable job to Manik Chand's son, it was noted in the Company's files, according to Rev. Long,[53] that Manik Chand had been of considerable help to the English for thirty years, that is, since 1733. In the first letter (dated 15 December 1756) Clive wrote to Manik Chand, he acknowledged Manik Chand's help gratefully: 'Upon my arrival in these parts from Madras, I was informed that you had shown a great friendship and regard for the English Company, for which I write to return you thanks.' The 'thanks', it can be argued, were 'returned' for the help Manik Chand rendered to the English in making their stay at Fulta comfortable. But it was this stay, during which preparations were made for an attack, which smacks of Manik Chand's inclination towards the English to the point of disloyalty to his master.

Going back to the English, it was Watson, and not Clive, who won the 'battle' for Calcutta. *Fort William Public Consulations*

[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 197-8.
[53] *Selections from the Government Records.*

dated 3 January 1757 record: 'Vice-Admiral Watson having taken Calcutta with His Majesty's ships of war, now delivers up the charge and possession of the fort and town to us, the President and Council as representatives of the Honourable East India Company.'[54] Clive himself admits it: 'Admiral Watson took possession of it in His Majesty's name, and the next day delivered it over to the Company's representatives.'[55] Clive had made no conspicuous contribution to the action of 30 December and 1 and 2 January. In fact he had asked Coote to postpone the battle for Baj-Baj until the next day (31 December), and it came as a surprise to him when he was informed that the fort had been taken before the midnight on 30 December. Clive was also full of misgivings and uncertainty about the future. In his letter dated 8 January 1757 to Pigot, he says:

> I cannot take upon me to give my sentiments about our future success against the Nabob in the open field; the little affair above mentioned was attended with every disadvantage on our side; a number of houses, jungalls, bushes, etc., which this country seems full of, served as a cover for the enemy—all our seapoys and the choice of our Europeans absent—our cannon in a manner useless. Indeed I fear we shall labour under many of these disadvantages when attacked by the Nabob, as I take it for granted that he will be down before the *Cumberland* and *Marlborough* can arrive.[56]

But he continued employing bullying tactics, and on the same day (8 January), he wrote the following letter to Manik Chand:

> It is a long time since I had the pleasure of hearing from you and of learning the news of your health which has given me great concern.
>
> From the past proceedings you must be sensible that we are not difficient in courage, nor do we want the strongest incitements to it from the injuries we have received. Your good sense and knowledge will make it unnecessary to observe that what has happened hitherto is very trifling, and that we cannot rest satisfied with the bare walls of Calcutta. We are come hither for satisfaction and redress of our wrongs, and I hope you will continue to shew yourself that friend to the English, which you have

[54] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 82-3. [55] *Ibid.*, p. 89.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

been so long esteemed, in making use of your interest, and that of your friends that we may obtain justice. I need not repeat our demands, which you are already well acquainted with. Should the Nabob refuse to listen to the terms we have proposed, it will occasion the utmost trouble in his country, and produce a terrible scene of confusion. Nor can it but be hurtfull to the Nabob himself, for victory depends not on numbers but the will of Providence. A wise and prudent man such as you are should endeavour beforehand to prevent things from coming to such extremities as may induce fresh enemies to rise up against the Nabob, whom the dread of his power now keeps quiet.[57]

Similar letters, seeking reconciliation, were written to Khwaja Wajid and Jagat Seth. But preparations had started on 4 January to storm and capture Hugli, and on 10 January, the English were actually masters of the town and its fort. The same Manik Chand, who had in 1756 led a contingent of the Nawab's army which captured Calcutta and drove the English, now makes no stand at Calcutta and leaves for Hugli. Thence he sent word to the Nawab at Murshidabad that the English he had now to deal with were very much different from those whom he had defeated in June last. Was he genuine in his belief or feigning, it is difficult to say. But it is a fact that the force he headed—less than 2,000— having fled or having been ordered to flee from Baj-Baj, Tanna and Calcutta, was demoralised. It was more numerous than the force the British were employing; it may have been deficient in ammunition, but it was not the real or assumed superiority of the ammunition that made the decision in favour of the English at Hugli as at the other places. If Manik Chand's fidelity to the Nawab had not really been disturbed by his friendly disposition towards the English, he must have entertained in his mind a belief that the English had, in the ships that arrived from Madras, enormous reserve of manpower and ammunition, and that if he fought manfully, he and his men would be butchered. Again, only utter lack of understanding accounting for lack of caution can exonerate Manik Chand of the charge that he let his men flee from the Hugli fort like cowards.

On 4 January, 'at 8 p.m. a detachment of 130 of King's troops and 200 *seapoys* under the command of Major Killpatrick, embarked on board the *Bridgewater, Kingsfisher, Thunder Bomb* and other small vessels in order to proceed up to Hughly, Captain King having a party of 200 seamen in the boats of the

[57] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Colonel Clive's Correspondence).

squadron'.[58] What happened later, on the day of engagement, is told thus by Henry Doidge:

> Jan. 10th.—The troops landed and took possession of the town, the twenty gun ship and sloop went abreast of the Fort and began to cannonade it, which they continued doing till about 12 o'clock at night; the Major sent me to examine the breach that the ships had made which I found practicable to enter, on which we formed two attacks, one of 50 men went to the main gate and kept a great noise with continual firing, whilst we entered privately at the breach; the sailors under Captain King, that were on shore with us put up our scaling ladders and assisted us in getting in, which we did without any loss, for the enemy (as we had imagined) went all to the place where our false attack was made, and run away through one of the gates; we found the Fort much stronger than we at first imagined and the garrison consisted of 2,000 men; we had some of our men killed and wounded before we stormed.[59]

Let there be no misunderstanding that the fort was suddenly surprised, and Manik Chand and his garrison, 2,000 strong, had no knowledge of the invader. The entries in the *Journal* allow no room for such a misunderstanding whatsoever. According to the entry dated 8 January, the English force 'got up as far as the French Gardens'. And the entry dated 9 January says:

> At noon the ships came to an anchor off Hughly and began firing (in order) to dislodge the enemy from the banks and houses where they might annoy us in landing. At 4 in the afternoon the troops landed about 700 yards below the Fort under cover of the ships which immediately (after) moved farther up the river and anchored close to the fort and began to batter in breach. That troops on landing took possession of the houses and avenues leading to the Fort, got their scaling ladders on shore, burnt the houses (before them) and lay in Coja Wazeed's garden till the breach was practicable.

Who will believe that of all this Manik Chand and other leading

[58] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 35 (*Journal of the Expedition to Bengal from 13 October, 1756, to 18 February, 1757*, kept by one of Colonel Clive's family.

[59] *Ibid.* p. 42.

men of the garrison were ignorant; as to what happened at dead of night on 10 January, the *Journal* says:

> About 2 o'clock this morning the troops marched up to the Fort and applying their ladders scaled the walls, making themselves masters of the place in less than an hour with little or no loss; having placed sufficient guards and posted sentries round the walls to prevent surprize, they lay on their arms till daylight.

A French account dated 18 January 1757 suggests fright as the cause of the flight of Manik Chand's forces:

> The 9th in the afternoon they (the English) passed before our Factory in a frigate of 20 guns, a brigantine and several boats or sloops, guided by Dutch pilots.... From here they went and anchored almost before Chinsurah, and next morning, after having landed a portion of their troops at the last house in this colony, they advanced in good order on the town of Hugli, which the Moors had abandoned to devote themselves to the defence of the fort; but the Moors frightened by the fire which was set to the houses on all sides and by the cannon shot fired from the firgate which had approached close to the bank in order to batter (the walls) retired about 3 a.m. and the English immediately entered by the breach.[60]

'The capture & destruction of Hughly,' write Drake and Becher in their letter to the Secret Committee for Affairs of the Company (dated 26 January 1757), 'was esteemed essential to strike a terror in the Suba's Troops & encourage any malcontents to declare in our favour.' They go on to say: 'The Fort was blown up by Major Killpatrick & the Town, Gunge, &ca., burnt to ashes. This we have reason to believe has had the desired effect & thrown the Country into a vast consternation.'[61]

With Manik Chand's forces fleeing and abandoning fort after fort, it was easy for the English to strike terror in the population. They succeeded in doing so remarkably and easily established their authority. 'One of the first steps We took after our return,' add Drake and Becher, 'was to write to the Zemindars of the neigh-

[60] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 116 (Letter from the French Council, Chandernagore, to the Syndics and Directors of the India Company at Paris).

[61] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*

bouring pergunnahs to pay the rent and revenues of their respective Districts into our Treasury, on pain of having their Country destroy'd in case of refusal. Several of them have sent their Vackeels and promised obedience to our orders, by this means. We have hopes of easing the Company considerably in the charges of the Operations it may be expedient to carry on against the Suba.'[62]

Terror reigned supreme everywhere. 'The 11th January,' to quote Hill, 'was spent in plundering the houses round the Fort.... From this time on to the 18th the troops were occupied in pillaging the native houses, even entering some within the Dutch Settlement on the plea that they belonged to subjects of the Nawab, or that property belonging to his subjects or plunder from Calcutta were concealed in them.'[63]

Without having to face any resistance worth the name, the English put themselves in possession of Calcutta and Hugli. But how could they be oblivious of the certain fear that the Nawab would march on them with a large army. In the third week of January, they received information of his troops moving from Murshidabad towards Calcutta, and Drake and Becher intimated the fact to their compatriots at Bombay and Madras, asking for more troops.[64]

[62] *Ibid.* [63] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. cxl.
[64] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*

CHAPTER EIGHT

Fear of Abdali's Invasion : Nawab's Treaty with the English

During the period of the distress of the English, the French and Dutch had been very helpful to them. Watts and Collet (of the Kasim Bazar Factory), after their release from the Nawab's confinement, were, at their own request, to be 'deliverd' (as they themselves said in their letter dated 2 July 1756) to Pigot, president of the English settlement at Fort Saint George, and in the meantime to be placed under 'the care of the French'. (They were released on or about 28 June.) How the French treated the English at their Chandra Nagar settlement is described thus in that letter:

> The civilitys that we and all the English have received from this Settlement requires the greatest acknowledgments. Lest any false reports shou'd reach Your Honour &c. We can assure you that to the best of our knowledge the French have given no Assistance to the Country Government but have suffer'd greatly themselves having been obliged to pay 40,000 Rupees and the Dutch as much or more.[1]

These two Englishmen stayed on at the French settlement even after the fall of Calcutta, carried on correspondence with their men at Fulta, and passed on to them whatever they learnt about political condition in the Nawab's country.

Similarly, the French at Dacca came to the help of the English when their factory at that place was surrounded by the Nawab's army in the last week of June. Richard Becher, Luke Scrafton, Thomas Hyndman, and Samuel Waller, of the English factory at Dacca, describe in their 'Consultations' dated 27 June 1756, how, on learning just then of the fall of Calcutta from the French, they sought the latter's good offices to negotiate with the Nawab about the surrender of the Dacca factory on honourable terms. They say

[1] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*

that the French chief, Courtin, 'was using his endeavors at the *Durbar* to save our lives and honor'.[2] Next day's (28 June) 'Consultations' describe how the French helped Becher and others maintain their honour. The first result of the negotiation between the French and the Dacca ruler, Dasarath Khan, the 'Consultations' say, was this:

> ... that the factory should be delivered up directly, the soldiers lay down their arms, and be carried prisoners to the Nabob, the ladies go out in pallanquins to the French factory, the pallanquins not to be searched on Monsieur Fleurin's (the French Second) giving his word that nothing should be in them but the cloaths the ladies had on. As to the Chief &c. Company's servants, the Nabob demanded that they should first be brought to him, and afterwards go to the French factory. Monsieur Courtin giving his parole to the Nabob that we shall wait the orders of Surrajah Dowlat in regard to our future fate.

When these proposals were conveyed by the French to the English, the latter, the 'Consultations' further say, decided to 'beg Monsieur Fleurin to endeavour to save us the disgrace of going to the Durbar, and obtain permission that we go directly to the French, also that the soldiers may not be ill used'. The French again used their persuasion with the ruler, and 'obtained permission for the gentlemen to go to the French factory without going to the *Durbar*', and also the promise that ' the soldiers should not be ill used or put in irons'.[3]

The following extract from a letter dated 24 November 1756, from the Dutch Council at Hugli, to their Supreme Council at Batavia, tells how the Dutch persuaded themselves to go to the help of the English:

> After the English who had been expelled from the country had arrived at Fulta, they wrote us several letters for assistance in the shape of anchors and ropes, provisions, clothes, &c. We determined unanimously in our Secret Consultations of the 28th June and the 12th July not to yield to our compassion for them in their misfortune at present. Still since then having remembered that the French are inveterate enemies of the English we assisted the latter as much as we could, and on the 20th of the last-mentioned month we came to a secret resolution, in conside-

[2] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 34-5. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7.

> ration of the close alliances between their nation and ours, to provide them with some food and clothes, intending to charge it to the English Company and also the anchors, 17 in number, which they took from Fulta for their use.[4]

To the Dutch, the Nawab was a 'tyrant',[5] because he had, on their refusal to assist them in his war against the English in June 1756, collected from them a sum of money as their contribution to the expenses of the war. Therefore, they welcomed the victorious re-appearance of the British, and the Director of their settlement at Hugli, Adriaan Bisdom, despatched, on 2 January 1757, a congratulatory letter to Watson: 'I have just received the agreeable news of the recapture of Calcutta by the arms of His Brritannic Majesty under command of your Excellency. I beg to congratulate you with all cordiality and respect. May the Almighty crown your further purposes and undertakings with the desired success.'[6] But the Dutch, being uncertain of the future, decided not to antagonise the Nawab by an alliance with the English against him, and preferred to remain neutral. This neutrality was wrongly suspected by Watson as benevolent to the Nawab—the suspicion was perhaps confirmed by Bisdom's expression of helplessness to meet Watson's request for five hundred head of cattle for 'refreshment' of which his men were in want.[7] What happened then is described thus in the Dutch records:

> Notwithstanding the strict neutrality observed by us during the proceedings of the Nawab against the British, and all the covert services rendered by us to the same while they were "down", possibly from jealousy of the advantage of the course we have chosen, Mr. Watson has since his very first appearance in the Ganges shown a kind of displeasure and mistrust in regard to us, and further in the sacking and plundering of the Moorish territory made it a pretext that the fugitives had been afforded an opportunity to escape and place their goods in safety, among which, as the English stated, there were many that were the proceeds of plundering by the Moors. Further that we had assisted the Moors with artillery, pretexts totally devoid of truth and, maybe, concocted so as to extend their raids even to within

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 306.
[5] *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 79 (Letter from the Dutch Director and Council of Bengal to the Assembly of Seventeen in Holland, dated Hugli, 2 January 1757).
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 78. [7] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

our limits, for Director Bisdom, when Calcutta was despoiled for the Nawab, ordered it to be publicly proclaimed by beat of drum, that all dwellers in our territories were strictly prohibited from buying any of the plundered goods. The only thing that can have caused the Admiral's displeasure may be that in the case of some of the officers of this expedition the plundering of a few villages was averted, and that those people (i.e. the Moors) being informed of our defenceless condition and being daily witnesses of the violence of the English sailors, flew elsewhere .... In addition to the acts of hostility committed within the Company's jurisdiction, the above-mentioned Mr. Watson caused one of the Company's quartermasters who had to bring up the brigantine De Ryder from Batavia, to be carried off his ship and compelled to pilot his armada right up to the Moorish fort here, which act will apparently be considered as an open proof of hostility by the Nawab who has already approached very near.[8]

The Dutch were terror-stricken lest they should be sandwiched between the advancing troops of the Nawab and those of the English who had already taken up position in the forts. They asked themselves 'whether we shall remain free from molestation, or, may be suddenly attacked, not being in a position to defend ourselves or offer resistance to the Nawab, whilst nearly all of our inhabitants have already taken to flight'. They sent 'all the European women aboard the ships to remain there until the danger is over'.[9]

The French too considered Siraj-ud-daula as an exacting despot; the freshest memory that confirmed this opinion was of the contribution the French, like the Dutch, were compelled to make towards the expenses of the war of June 1756. The Nawab, says Jean Law, chief of the French factory at Kasim Bazar, 'thought only of increasing his wealth. If any extraordinary expense had to be met he ordered contributions and levied them with extreme vigour.'[10] After Siraj-ud-daula's victory over Shaukat Jang, who had again rebelled against him in October, the French were repenting why they did not join with Shaukat Jang and missed a 'favourable opportunity'.[11] The French hatred of the Nawab was so

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 81-2 (Dutch Director's letter to the Assembly of Seventeen in Holland).
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 102 (Letter dated 13 January 1757, from the Dutch Council, Hugli, to M. Vernet).
[10] *Op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 172. [11] *Ibid.*, p. 173.

intense that the prejudice subordinated reason, and they avidly looked forward to his defeat at the hands of the English, even when they had known that they and the English were again at war in Europe. Says Law: 'Hardly giving any attention to the war in Europe with which we were menaced I desired nothing so much as to see the Nawab well beaten by the English.'[12] It was in the middle of December that the French in Bengal learnt of the European war; the English did so early in January 1757. This news led to the adoption of the following resolution by the Fort William Select Committee (present at which were Drake, Clive, Watts, Becher and Holwell) on 7 January:

> War being declared in Europe against the French, the Committee are of opinion a neutrality with that nation within the Ganges would be of great advantage in our present circumstances as a junction between the Nabob and them might put a stop to the success of our arms or at least obstruct the measures we must take to bring the *Subah* to our terms.
>
> Agreed we adress Admiral Watson upon that subject and recommend the concluding a treaty of neutrality with the French in Bengal for the reasons aforesaid.[13]

But the French had already made overtures to Watson for neutrality. They say: 'We were still ignorant of the capture of Calcutta and believed the English in front of Budge Budge [Baj-Baj], when we sent Messrs. Laporterie and Sinfray as a deputation to the Admiral in order to find out their intentions.' The two French deputies were instructed 'to ascertain' whether the French 'were to regard the English as enemies, seeing the rumours afloat of the declaration of war in Europe and its announcement in Bombay, or whether he intended to maintain the neutrality always observed in the Ganges between Europeans'.[14] Watson's reply to the overtures was that he would not sign a treaty of neutrality unless the French 'would make a defensive and offensive alliance against the Nawab'. Watson's proposals did not 'suit' the French who, as they say, 'were compelled at all risks to recall our deputies and ... impelled to continue our preparations and to keep ourselves on guard, for it was natural to think that the English, to whom

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 177. [13] *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 88.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 114 (Letter dated 18 January 1757, from the French Council, Chandra Nagar, to the Syndics and Directors of the India Company at Paris).

it was essential not to have us for enemies, rejected the neutrality only to reserve for themselves the power of attacking us whenever they considered they could do so advantageously; we had all the more reason to suspect them of this design because in the interview with the deputies, the Admiral pretended that we had committed breaches of this neutrality in the Ganges during the last war and that we had recently given assistance to the Nawab at the time of the capture of Calcutta'.[15] These talks were conducted on 14 January.[16]

In the strategic and psychological handling of the situation created by the Anglo-French War in Europe, Watson proved himself superior to French leaders in Bengal. This is apparent from the reply (dated 12 January 1757) he made to the resolution of the Fort William Select Committee:

> You are not unacquainted with my having already offered to enter into a neutrality with the French provided they would join our force against the Nabob of this province, which they have refused to agree to. I on my part can by no means consent to any other terms as I am well perswaded whilst I remain here they will not dare to act against us, and my not directly agreeing to their terms will be a cheque on their trade.

He also said:

> In the meantime I have no intention of breaking the neutrality whilst the observing it can be of any advantage to the Company's interest and it shall be my care when I go away to leave you in perfect security against the French as far as it depends on me. I had flattered myself the constant attention I have showed to your interest since my arrival here would have made it quite unnecessary for you to have made me such an application.[17]

'The reason of Watson entertaining this opinion about the French —'they dare not act against us'—was that they had quite timidly allowed the English to pass by Chandra Nagar while the latter were marching for an attack on Hugli. The French explanation for this was:

> On the return of the deputies we doubted for a long time, in

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 114-15. [16] *Ibid.*, p. 91. [17] *Ibid.*, pp. 101-2.

the state of incertitude in which we were as to the intentions of the English, whether it were wise to allow them to pass under our cannon to seize a place which permitted them to place us under two fires, and the capture of which might draw on us a quarrel with the Government [Nawab], which would reproach us for not having stopped its enemies when we could. On the other hand it was alleged that our Factory was exposed to serious danger of being burnt if we opposed the passage of the English ships, which we could not do without the Nawab's orders. Besides the Ganges having always been neutral water and the English not having yet committed any act of hostility, but on the contrary having allowed some of our vessels to pass, we could not take it upon us to begin the attack without express orders, or at least without some infraction of the neutrality on their part, and in consequence it was unanimously agreed, after having maturely considered the reasons on both sides, not to depart from the neutrality and to continue solely to hold ourselves prepared for all events in such a fashion as to deprive them of the desire to attempt anything against our colony.[18]

Seized by an utterly gloomy predicament of mind, the French were groping for light that might guide them to take a decision, but they were not finding any. They hated the Nawab and wished his downfall; they did not like the English, and shuddered to visualise a prospect in which the English would emerge victorious and so arrogant as to lord it over them. The only light their retrospection gave them was that 'whatever success' the English might have, 'one may perhaps be sure that they will never re-establish themselves firmly without coming to terms with the Government, and that it will be only by virtue of a treaty that they will be at peace in Bengal'. Then they entertained the apprehension that 'whatever may be the result of these events we think we have always much more to fear from the Nawab than from the English, or to speak more exactly we think we have everything to fear on the part of the former. Therefore they feared that 'the defeat of the English and their second expulsion from the country would be a much more desperate position' for them, 'for one cannot say how far the Nawab would push his violence, and whether he would not be equally inclined to revenge upon us this last irruption of the English'.[19]

In this predicament, the only course that could ensure safety

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 115. [19] *Ibid.*, pp. 116-17.

to the French was to allow themselves to be employed as mediators between the Nawab and the English, and they adopted it. The Nawab had already left Murshidabad with a large army to meet the English force. But he had been given a very exaggerated picture of the latter. Says Jean Law:

> A number of the fugitives did not recover from their fright till they reached Murshidabad, where Manik Chand the Moorish commander of Calcutta contributed as much as they did to spread the alarm. He assured the Nawab that the English who had just come were of a quite different species to those whom he had beaten in Calcutta.[20]

A man who shows his back to his enemy and flees, whether in terror or for lack of courage, as Manik Chand did, could make no other explanation to his chief than the one Manik Chand made. After his return from Baj-Baj, Manik Chand remained in Calcutta only a few hours, and proceeded to Hugli, leaving a garrison of five hundred men. He left Hugli also, and, says Orme, 'having likewise communicated his own terror, he proceeded to carry them to the Nawab at Moorshedabad'. This was an extraordinary behaviour for a general, and, as already stated, can only be palliated by the excuse that his troops were inadequate and ill-equipped. Nevertheless, it was a fact that the English the Nawab had now to deal with were comparatively stronger than what they were when he defeated them in June last. It is one thing to give information of a fact; and quite another to strike terror that is bound to have a demoralising effect. What Manik Chand actually told the Nawab, and what effect it had on the Nawab is not known. We learn from Jean Law that the Nawab seemed to be maintaining his former temper: 'He was the more irritated against Europeans in general as the English had passed Chandernagore without opposition, and because it had been reported to him that the Dutch had given them assistance.' However, says Law, 'by force of entreaties and by the interest of various persons I had almost brought back the Nawab to his former disposition in our favour. I had obtained a very favourable *parwana* for M. Renualt.' Later, when the Nawab heard a report that the French, in allowing passage to the English at Chandra Nagar, had committed a hostile action against him, he ordered the *parwana* 'to be torn up'. 'But,' Law goes on to say, 'in the end this rage of the Nawab

[20] *Op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 179.

against us had no consequences; the gentlemen at Chandernagore having had the opportunity of proving to him how very far they were from acting in concert with the English.' When these 'gentlemen' apprised the Nawab of what had passed between the French and the English spokesmen, he was convinced that the former would 'assist him', and 'wrote to M. Renault', the French Director in Bengal, 'and swore that he would not conclude the war except by his mediation, or by the total destruction of the English'. And 'he decided to attack them as vigorously as possible'. The English first declined the French offer of mediation, but on second thoughts, considered it worthy of utilisation. 'The English,' says Law, 'though bold enough to refuse our mediation, were not without inquietude. ... It was their interest to decide the quarrel in the quickest way, for fear we should resolve to take part in it'.[21]

Before the mediation went into the hands of the French, Clive, who, as already stated, had expressed anxiety about the inadequacy of the English force, had started correspondence with a few eminent Indians, intimately associated with the Court of the Nawab, seeking reconciliation. On 8 January he wrote to Jagat Seth the following letter:

> As you are a very great merchant and a man of much reputation and interest with the Nabob, I write you this letter of friendship that you may endeavour to settle all affairs for your Master's interest, your own, and the Company's. You must have heard that we have shewn no want of courage on the Coromandel Coast, and we have much stronger reasons to exert ourselves upon this occasion when we have been so much injured by the Nabob. I depend upon your using your interest and endeavour to prevail upon the Nabob to give us satisfaction for our losses, by which means you will prevent the province from being ruined.[22]

On the same date, he wrote to Khwaja Wajid:

> From your letter to Major Kilpatrick I understand that you are apprehensive, some malicious persons have been endeavouring to depreciate your character with the Company's agents at this place. I have never heard any one say you was an enemy to

[21] Quotations in this paragraphs are from a Memoir by Jean Law. See pp. 180-2, Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III.
[22] *Ibid.*

the English. I am sure it is not for your interest to be so. You have always been esteem'd amongst our most hearty friends, nor do I doubt but you will use all your interest with the Nabob that these troubles may be ended by a peaceable and happy accommodation.[23]

On 10 January Wajid returned the following reply to Clive:

I have received your obliging letter. . . . I wrote a letter to the Major sometime ago, the contents of which you are without doubt acquainted with. I shall be very glad to have an answer to it. When I receive the answer and am made acquainted with your demands I will represent them to the Nabob, and you may be assured of my interest and all the assistance I can give in getting them complied with. When I know the Nabob's pleasure in this affair I will let you know it. Be assured of my earnest desire to see you, and in the meantime I beg I may be favour'd with your correspondence.

P. S.—Though I have always been a well-wisher and an old friend of the English Company, yet no person has been so great a sufferer in the late disturbances as I am. Notwithstanding which I still look upon your interest as my own. When I have your answer to this letter I will use my utmost endeavours with the Nabob for the success of your affairs, and will acquaint you with his determination. Look upon me always as your steadfast and true friend and let me obtain your favour.[24]

Between the date of Clive's letter to the Jagat Seth and the latter's reply dated 14 January had occurred the holocaust at Hugli, and the Jagat Seth resentfully makes a reference to it:

Your favour I have with great pleasure receiv'd, and give due attention to the contents. You are pleas'd to say that the Nabob listens to what I may recommend, and hope I will exert myself for your good and the general benefit of the country. My business is that of a merchant, and probably what I may recommend in that way he may give ear to. You have acted the very reverse part and possess'd yourselves of Calcutta by force, after which you have taken and destroyed the city of Hughley, and by all appearances you seem to have no design but that of fighting. In what manner then can I introduce an application

[23] *Ibid.* [24] *Ibid.*

for accommodating matters between the Nabob and you. What your intentions are it is impossible to find out from these acts of hostility. Put a stop to this conduct and let me know what your demands are. You may then depend upon it. I will use my interest with the Nabob to finish these troubles. How can you expect that the Nabob can pass by or overlook your conduct in pretending to take up arms against the Prince or Subah of the country. Weigh this within yourself.

Clive's boast of what the English had done on the Coromandal Coast and his threat that they could give a similar performance in Bengal was answered with a tone of greater superiority and threat only by the Jagat Seth. Clive did not answer this letter, and appears to have avoided further correspondence with him. Wajid, however, did not allow his temper to be ruffled by the happenings at Hugli, but introduced the French, perhaps at their suggestion, into the correspondence. However distasteful this introduction might have been to the English, they could not afford to alienate Wajid, who alone at that time promised to be a link of negotiation. This is what Wajid wrote to Clive about the French mediation in his letter dated 17 January: 'I have desired Mr. Renault, the Director of Chandernagore, to endeavour accomodating matters between the Nabob and the English. Mr. Renault will inform you more particularly.'[25] Wajid also said (in the same letter) that he would 'not be wanting' in his 'endeavours in conjunction with Jagat Seth to adjust matters'.

On the other hand, the English Company's Indian spies were at work and posting them with intelligence they gathered from their enemy's camp. On or about 16 January, Fort William received the following intelligence from one Rang Lall Brahman:

That he went to the Nabob's camp which was then at Amboe. That Souragud Dowle was there himself and about 2 hours after he moved from thence and encamped near Nya Saray. That he has with him about 15,000 horse and 7,000 gunmen, that he has a Train of about 50 pieces of cannon, six of which are large, the rest are small. That there are four sledges (?kedges) of baums (? bombs) or rockets behind the artillery. That there are 6 waggons of gunpowder and 4 waggons of shott, where the red flag is hoisted. That Jaffer Cawn in about one *cos* above the *Gunge*. [The Ganges] at Hughly and Dussamatun

[25] *Ibid.*

ud Cawn [Dassarath Khan] at Nya Saray. That Rohim Cawn [Rahim Khan] is on this side the river opposite the *Gunga*. That the Nawab has sixty boats with him, on which he designs to cross his army as soon as he has recovered Hughly.[26]

On 19 January, the Nawab and his army reached Tribeni, a little above Hugli. Now the only chance of avoiding a clash was to carry on negotiations; this Clive did, and, at the same time, continued spreading the impression that the English force he commanded was formidable. On 21 January, he wrote to two feudal lords, Maharaja Swarup Chand and Mahtab Rai, seeking their good offices for settlement of the dispute between the English and the Nawab, and saying:

> You should consider that the English are a great nation, and that a King reigns over them not inferior in power to the Padsha himself. What resentment will not His Imperial Majesty express when he comes to hear of the death of so many of his faithful subjects? You should likewise consider that the great Commander of his Majesty's ship is sent to represent him in person, and that I have the same power, as the King of England's officer, and have my commission signed by his own hand. I hope you will not think me vain in telling you that we have had as powerful enemies as the Nabob to deal with upon the Coast of Cormandel and been attended with success; the like may happen here. However I hope the Nabob will not reduce us to the cruel necessity of trying our strength, for after all success depends upon God alone, who will aid and assist the injured.[27]

Once again he made the same request and held out the same threat in his letter of 21 January to Wajid. With the above two letters (one to Maharaja Swarup Chand and Mahtab Rai, and the other to Wajid), Clive sent the following proposals for a treaty with the Nawab:

> 1. That the Nabob cause satisfaction to be made to the Company, to the English and all other inhabitants under their protection, for all the losses they have sustained by the capture of Calcutta, Cossimbazar, and all their other Settle-

[26] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Col. Clive's Correspondence).
[27] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. II., p. 110 (Extract from Select Committee Proceedings, Fort William, 16 January 1757).

ments; that he cause restitution to be made of all goods, affects, merchandize, &c., seized at the different *aurungs*.

2. That he put the Company in full possession of all the countries, villages, priviledges, &c., granted them by the royal *phirmaund*.
3. That he suffer the English to secure and fortify themselves in their own possessions in such manner as not to be liable to the like misfortunes in future.
4. That he suffer the Company to erect a mint in Calcutta, endowed with the same priviledges with the mint at Muxadavad, and that if the rupees of Calcutta be of equal weight and fineness with those of Muxadavad they may pass current without any deduction of *batta*.[28]

Wajid took the proposals to the French; their records give an account of his reaction to them:

1. Coja Wajid thinks there will be no difficulty about the first article.
2. Coja Wajid asks the English to fix the amount of damages claimed, if it is wished to make the Nawab responsible for the pillage of Calcutta by his troops. It seems to him that if the gentlemen of the Secret Committee sincerely desire peace, they can only reasonably demand and claim the merchandize and property taken at Calcutta besides those mentioned in the inventory already prepared.
3. As regards the right of fortification Coja Wajid thinks that this article may be granted in the terms demanded.
4. As regards the fourth article he says that, seeing that the English nation has never had this privilege in Bengal, it is not right to demand it, and further the Nawab is not able to grant a right which depends upon the *Mogul* [the Mughal Emperor] and which might damage the currency of that Prince.[29]

The Nawab was yet far from Calcutta and the draft of treaty had not been despatched to him when, on 23 January, he wrote a letter to Watson, saying:

You write me that the King your Master sent you into India to

[28] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Col. Clive's Correspondence).
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

protect the Company's Settlements, trade, rights and privileges. The instant I received that letter I sent you an answer, but it appears to me that my reply never reached you, for which reason I write again. I must inform you that Roger Drake, the Company's chief in Bengal, acted contrary to the orders I sent him and encroached upon my authority. He gave protection to the King's subjects who absented themselves from the inspection of the *Durbar*, which practice I forbid, but to no purpose. On this (account) I was determined to punish him and accordingly expelled him my country. But it was my inclination to have given the English Company permission to carry on their trade as formerly, had another chief been sent here. For the good therefore of these provinces and the inhabitants, I send you this letter, and if you are inclined to reestablish the Company only appoint a chief, and you may depend upon my giving a currency to their commerce upon the same terms they heretofore enjoyed. If the English behave themselves like merchants and follow my orders, they may rest assured of my favor, protection and assistance.

(At the bottom is wrote in the Nabob's own hand.)

If you imagine that by carrying on a war against me you can establish your trade in these dominions you may do as you think fit.[30]

'To this letter, Watson made the following reply in his letter dated 27 January:

> You tell me in your letter that the reason of your having expelled the English out of these countries was the bad behaviour of Mr. Drake, the Company's chief in Bengal. But besides that Princes and Rulers of States, not seeing with their own eyes or hearing with their own ears, are often misinformed, and the truth kept from them by the arts of crafty and wicked men, was it becoming the justice of a Prince to punish all for one man's fault, or to ruin and destroy so many innocent people as had no way offended, but relying on the faith of the royal *phirmaund* expected protection and security both to their property and lives, instead of oppression and murder which they unhappily found? I say are these acts of justice becoming a Prince? No body will say they are. They can only then have been caused by wicked men, who misrepresented things to you

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 130-1.

through malice or for their own private ends. For great Princes delight in acts of justice and in shewing mercy. If therefore you are desirous of meriting the fame of a great Prince, and a lover of justice, shew your abhorence of these proceedings by punishing those evil counsellors that advised them. Cause satisfaction to be made to the Company and others who have been deprived of their property, and by these acts of justice turn the edge of the sword that is ready to fall upon the heads of your innocent subjects.

If you have any cause of complaint against Mr. Drake, as it is but just the master alone should have a power over his servant send your complaints to the Company; and I will answer for it they will give you satisfaction.

Although I am a soldier as well as you, I had rather receive satisfaction from your justice, than to be obliged to force it by the distress of your innocent subjects.[31]

(The last paragraph was written in the Admiral's own hand.) Either before or after the receipt of the above letter, the Nawab wrote another letter to Watson (the date is missing, but it was in January), saying:

You have taken and plundered Houghley, and made war upon my subjects: these are not actions becoming merchants! I have therefore left Muxadabad, and am arrived near Houghley; I am likewise crossing the river with my army, part of which is advanced towards your camp. Nevertheless, if you have a mind to have the Company's business settled upon its ancient footing and to give a currency to their trade, send a person of confidence to me, who can make your demands, and treat with me upon this affair. I shall not scruple to grant a perwannah for the restitution of all the Company's Factories, and permit them to trade in my country upon the same terms as formerly. If the English who are settled in those provinces, will behave like merchants obey my orders, and give me no offence, you may depend upon it, I will take their losses into consideration, and adjust matters to their satisfaction. You know how difficult it is to prevent soldiers from plundering in war; therefore if you will on your parts relinquish something of the damages you have sustained by being pillaged by my army, I will endeavour to give you satisfaction even in that particular, in order to gain your friend-

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 173.

ship and preserve a good understanding for the future with your nation. You are a Christian, and know how much preferable it is to accommodate a dispute than to keep it alive, but if you are determined to sacrifice the interest of your Company and the good of private merchants to your inclinations for war, it is no fault of mine. To prevent the fatal consequences of such a ruinous war I write this letter.[32]

The correspondence cited above and that which passed between the parties subsequently was a battle of wits, in which four groups of people were now participating—the English, the Nawab, the French and some merchants. The first three were afraid of, and hated, each other, and were uncertain as to the result of the impending war. Of the merchants, Wajid and Omi Chand had had business dealings with the English for many years, and both the parties made huge profits from the sale and purchase of saltpetre. Therefore if it was mutual fear that impelled the three to negotiate for peace, it was self-interest that made the merchants active participants in the negotiations. Although the English had first spurned the French offer for mediation, Watson, after Wajid had employed Renault for mediation, came down from his previous attitude, and said (in his letter to Clive dated 22 January): 'I own I am not so very averse to our putting some confidence in the French, who I think would be glad at this juncture not to embroil themselves, but endeavour to make matters up between our Company and the Nabob.'[33] With regard to the French offer of neutrality also, the English descended from the position they had previously taken up, and now themselves made an offer for neutrality in the Ganges. The reason for this descent, as the Select Committee of Fort William state in their letter dated 26 January 1757 to the Secret Committee, London, was:

> By concluding such a treaty of neutrality, we prevented their (the French) assisting the *Suba* in any shape against us; secured our own Settlement (at present but ill prepared to withstand an European enemy) from any apprehensions of its being attacked by them, and were thereby left at liberty to prosecute the war against the Nabob with more vigour.[34]

The French also feared that in the event of the English emerging triumphant, they would constitute a danger to their (French) set-

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 203-4. [33] *Ibid.*, p. 130. [34] *Ibid.*, p. 168.

tlement at Chandra Nagar, and believed that if the English-Nawab dispute was settled peaceably, the authority of the Nawab could be invoked in the event of British designs being asserted against Candra Nagar. The French fear was not baseless; the English did indeed entertain an evil design against Chandra Nagar even when their affair with the Nawab was hanging fire. Out of their own necessity and having been treated gracelessly by the English, the French made friends with the Nawab, but only ostensibly, and never with an intention of rendering him help against the English whose trust in French neutrality they were not prepared at any cost to shake.

Such was the state of mutual distrust in which negotiations on the one hand, and preparations for war on the other, were going on. The English believed that the Nawab lacked full confidence as to the result of the war. They say in their letter: 'That the Nabob is uneasy and apprehensive of the consequences of the war he has brought upon himself, we have good reason to believe from a letter of Coja Wazeed's to Colonel Clive and the mediation they have desired the French to undertake in order to accommodate matters.' Nevertheless, they apprehended that the war might come on their head, and were busily engaged in strengthening their defences, and were anxiously waiting for the arrival of reinforcement from Bombay. They say (in the same letter):

> As it would be imprudent to risque a second capture of the Settlement in case we should be unsuccessfull in the field, we are making the present fort as defensible as we can by digging a ditch 30 feet wide round the walls (forming a *fausse-bray*), levelling the houses within—paces round, and throwing up a glacis with the dirt of the ditch and the rubbish of the houses.

The Nawab too was preparing himself for both eventualities—war or peace. On 30 January, he wrote two letters: one to the English (Clive) and the other to the French (Renault). In the former he says:

> You write that you desire to have matters accommodated, and to live in good understanding with me, to have reparations for the Company's losses. Assure yourself I will make no scruple of complying with the demand. I find it is both our intentions that measures for the Company's losses, the country's good, and

the safety of the inhabitants should be pursued. Therefore send a person of entire trust and confidence with orders and powers to treat upon these affairs. You may send such a person without being under any apprehensions of his safety. You may depend upon my giving a currency to the Company's business at all their Factories upon its former footing. I make no doubt things will be soon accommodated upon your sending such a person. The manner and time of restoring the Company's losses shall be settled.... If you are willing to make up these troubles and will live in friendship with me, I shall never be wanting on my part to forward your Company's business, and shew their servants my favour upon all occasions. To render justice and to study the good (of) my country and tenants are what I am desirous of. This is what I have always had at heart: for this reason God has always blessed me with success.[35]

But on the same day, he wrote to Renault:

To the greatest of merchants, the model of true friends, M. Renault, Director-General of the French Company. Be always happy. I remember that between the greatest of merchants and the English, a people without faith, there is enmity and hatred. This agrees with what these faithless persons have written to Farouktontdjar [Khwaja Wajid], that they do not wish to correspond with me through the French, whilst I—I will never pardon their crimes except at your intercession. For your information I send you the letter to Farouktontdjar which I have received. I learn also by Raja Manikchand, my beloved brother and sustainer of my grandeur and power, that it is certain that the greatest of merchants promises to assist me. This is why I notify you, that if you, who are the model of true friends, employ your power to aid me, and if you continue in this intention, you should prepare the ships of war which you have in this country, put one of my people on each, and send them to punish this faithless people and chase them from this country. I abolish for ever the annual imposts on your commerce, and I give you the right to establish a mint at Chandernagore. I will demand a firman for this from the light of the presence, the greatest and purest, the Emperor of Delhi, and will send it to you. Until the arrival of the firman I will give you a parwana, with my seal, so that you may exercise these two privileges with

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 184-5.

perfect tranquillity of mind. I will load you with benefits and marks of my good will.[36]

Even this abundantly tempting offer did not bring about an anti-English alliance between the Nawab and the French, who, according to Jean Law's Narrative, wanted the settlement between the English and the Nawab to be delayed. But letters were being daily exchanged between various parties including the Nawab, and any excuse could hardly delay the settlement or war; for the Nawab was advancing, though slowly, and the English were getting apprehensive. On 29 January, Clive learnt 'that the Nabob's brother had crossed the river with 10,000 men at a place called Cowgauchee, about 18 miles from our camp, and that the Nabob himself was following. It is computed the whole army may amount to 30,000 fighting men and 50 pieces of cannon. Notwithstanding these formidable preparations he seems disposed for Peace and we are now treating.' This is what Clive wrote to John Adlercron, Colonel of a regiment on 30 January, adding 'how affairs will end is very doubtful'.[37] Prospects of peace were now rising and those of war receding. The very next day of the offer the Nawab made to the French, he again wrote to Clive (1 February), repeating what he had said several times earlier, and adding: 'You know peace is better than war. Whether the Company's business shall flourish or fall is in your power, therefore I have sent you these two words to prevent further trouble.'[38] To this letter, Clive returned the following reply:

The two letters which your Excellency favour'd me with I have received which gave me much pleasure. You ask whether we chuse to have war or peace. My inclinations are rather to obtain peace from your favour; none but bad men can wish for war: my views are quite for the reverse: nothing can equal the pleasure which I received from the favourable sentiments expressed in Your Excellency's letter. I thank God I have found you so graciously inclined. I shall send a relation of my own and another person tomorrow morning to confer with Your Excellency about our affairs, who will fully explain to you my inclinations, and may advise me in return of your pleasure. The proposals they shall make to you I hope will meet with your concurrence. I esteam Your Excellency in the place of my father and mother, and myself as your son, and should

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 185-6. [37] *Ibid.*, p. 184. [38] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

think myself happy to lay down my life for the preservation of yours.[39]

On this very date (3 February), the Nawab's army began to file past Clive's camp towards Calcutta. (Eyre Coote puts the number of the Nawab's troops at 40,000 horse and 60,000 foot, 50 elephants and 30 pieces of cannon. The British force was 711 foot, 100 artillerymen with 14 six-pounder field-pieces, and 1,300 Indian soldiers.)[40] Why was the Nawab's army advancing, in spite of the negotiations for peace going on between him and Clive? The Nawab gives the following explanation in his reply of 3 February to Clive's letter of the same date (quoted above):

> This place being unfit for encamping my army, for this reason my forces have marched forward and are encamped in Omichaund's garden. Let not this give you any uneasiness. Your business is with me. Rest contented and send me your relation and the other person whom you shall depute to settle affairs with me as soon as possible. I swear by God and his prophet that no evil shall happen to them. Let them fairly represent your demands to me, and I will grant them. I have given orders to all the Jemaidars that they commence no disturbance. Do not you be under any apprehension on this account but send away the deputies to me with safety.[41]

In order to reassure Clive of his sincerity, the Nawab sent to him, through Khwaja Petruse, who was one of the active mediators between the parties (the other chief mediator being Ranjeet Roy) 'a present of turnips and flowers', (Ranjeet Roy's letter to Clive, dated 3 February).[42] But Clive was still apprehensive, rather panic-stricken; this is evident from the letter he wrote to his father on 3 or 4 February:

> We are encamped with our little army; and the Nabob is at the head of forty thousand men to give us battle. I am in hopes everything will be concluded to the Company's advantages, though not in so glorious a manner as I could wish. . . . I heartily wish in these perilous and uncertain times all my money was

[39] *Ibid.* [40] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 43-4.
[41] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Col. Clive's Correspondence).
[42] *Ibid.*

in England; for I do not think it safe here; no one knows what the event of war may be in these parts.[43]

Similar uncertainty about the future had, it appears, seized the Nawab. What was passing in Clive's mind is stated above, but such a positive account of the Nawab's mind is not available. Accounts left by others and letters exchanged then between different parties seem to carry proof for the conclusion that he was uncertain about the future. The few bankers and merchants who had profited a great deal from trade with the English, and who had developed a dislike for Siraj-ud-daula, were playing the role of mediators. They heartily wished the English to be re-established. About them Jean Law writes thus:

> They were not pleased with Siraj-ud-daula who did not show them the same respect as the old Nawab Aliverdikhan, but the arrival of the English forces, the capture of the Moorish forts, and the fright of the Nawab before Calcutta had made a change which was apparently in their favour. The Nawab began to understand that the bankers were necessary to him. The English would have no one but them as mediators and so they had become, as it were, sponsors for the conduct both of the Nawab and of the English. Accordingly, from the conclusion of the Peace there was nothing but kind and polite acts on the part of the Nawab towards them, and he consulted them in everything, but at the bottom it was only trickery. . . . The cause of the English had become that of the Seths. Their interests were the same. Can anyone be surprised to find them acting in concert? Further, if we call to mind that it was this same house of *saukars* which overthrew Sarfaraz Khan to enthrone Aliverdikhan, and which during the reign of the latter had the management of all important business, one must confess that it ought not to be difficult for persons of so much influence to execute a project in which the English would take a share.[44]

One can, therefore, easily understand Omi Chand, for a while victim of the Fort William Council's suspicion and displeasure, and now confident of the English ascending to their former position, writing (28 January) to Clive and making an abject surrender.

[43] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. II. pp. 209-10.
[44] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 185-6.

Omi Chand, as already stated, was one of the bulk-suppliers of saltpetre to the English: 'God be praised that Calcutta is again restored to its former splendour by your happy arrival.... God grant that I may get free from my confinement, that I may throw myself at your feet and lay my whole conduct before you, who will grant me justice, and then I shall be delivered from all my misfortunes.'[45]

Now about the officers of the Nawab's army. 'He saw,' says Law, 'that many of his officers were unwilling to march.'[46] According to Scrafton, Siraj-ud-daula 'discovered some appearance of disaffection in some of his principal officers, particularly in Mir Jaffar, whose conduct in this affair had been very mysterious'.[47] Confirming this, Law goes on to say:

> The nearer he got to Hugli the more did bad news confirm itself and the more he recognised the truth of the reports made to him touching the superiority of the English troops to his own. He learned that the English had abandoned Hugli to return to Calcutta. This raised his hopes again a little, but as he always noticed much reluctance in the behaviour of certain chiefs of his army, he took the course he was advised to of asking our mediation.[48]

What ambition Mir Jafar was harbouring in his breast then is not known; there is room to entertain the conjecture that he would welcome a situation in which he himself might be made Nawab of Bengal. As far back as 1749, when certain local chiefs had risen in revolt against Alivardi Khan, Mir Jafar and Rai Durlabh had, by turn, been offered Nawabship of Bengal (by the rebels), but since there was not the shadow of a chance of the revolt succeeding, the offer was refused.[49] Soon after assuming the reigns of the Subaship, Siraj-ud-daula had dismissed some of his grandfather's officers. He had promoted Mohan Lal (his household *Diwan*) to be head *Diwan* or Prime Minister; but Mir Jafar remained on his former post of *Bakhshi* or Paymaster of the Army. (Mir Jafar had married Alivardi Khan's half-sister.) In April 1756, Siraj-ud-daula, before proceeding against his rival,

[45] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 174, vol. III, p. 181.
[46] Jean Law's *Memoir*.
[47] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*
[48] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Bengal Public Consultations, 29 March 1749).
[49] *Ibid.*

Shaukat Jang, suspected the fidelity of Mir Jafar, and felt reassured only when the Paymaster swore on the Koran. Yet, says Law, 'before the departure of the army from Murshidabad a plot was already formed, in which it is pretended that Mir Jafar, the *Bakshi*, was engaged and some of the chief *jemadars*'.[50]

To this background might be added the suggestion, which springs from corrupt practices usually employed by the British to win over important persons at the courts of emperors and princes, that some of the Nawab's men had been heavily bribed. A false terror had been created: the Nawab's officers hesitated to march and desired a peaceful settlement. This desire looks strange when it is borne in mind that the Nawab's huge army had to face only a small 'body' of the English force—(it is Captain Eyre Coote, who calls it 'our body, for', he adds, 'I cannot call it our army').[51]

With two differences, the situation was analogous to that which obtained at the time of the Nawab's departure last summer (May-June 1756) from Murshidabad, and during his march towards Calcutta. Then too it was a merchant (Wajid) who had volunteered himself or been employed by the Nawab as an emissary between him and the English. Then too insulting and haughty behaviour meted out to his messengers and himself by the English (Drake and his council) did not deter him from asking Fort William again and again, even while he was on his march, not to defy his authority but to carry out his orders. He displayed the same tolerance now and was not provoked by the challenging letters of Pigot, Watson and Clive, delivered to him soon after the arrival of the fleet from Fort Saint George in December. Then too the French had declined, though very politely, to help him, and he had, instead of getting provoked by the refusal, put up a disposition of equanimity and written back to them a graceful letter. Then too he had held out temptation to them and offered them Calcutta as a reward if they made common cause with him against the English. Now again, he made tempting offers of considerable trade concessions, and continued his invitations in spite of their refusal. This comparison leads one to the inference that the provocation did not influence his decisions and that he preferred settlement of disputes by peaceful negotiations to a resort to arms. His decision to let the English stay on at Fulta and his letter to Pigot, soon after his victory at Calcutta, can be safely interpreted as suggestive of his desire to re-admit the Company into Bengal. The Company had, during a hundred years, become a

[50] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 174. [51] *Ibid.*, pp. 43-4.

powerful, essential and almost inevitable factor in the trade and commerce of the province, and had left a void. It was not fear, again it might be interpreted, that dictated this decision to him; for if it was fear, he would not have left Calcutta in poor defences; in fact, he did not believe that the English would challenge him with increased troops and increased arms.

The two differences between the situation as it was in June, and as it was in January, were: the English now were in possession of a bigger force than they had in June; and there were, allegedly, some discontented and undependable elements in the Nawab's army. But the English 'body' (to borrow Coote's expression) was insignificant compared with his huge army; and his constant progress towards his destination can at once suggest that he had faith in his army. Thus, his disposition and his attitude were just like those he had in June. Wajid's efforts for peaceful settlement did not succeed then; he might have naturally thought that similar efforts might not succeed this time also.

Therefore, even on 3 February, when he had asked Clive to send him two persons for negotiations, his army was moving on. Of that day's progress of the Nawab's army, the Journal of the Expedition to Bengal from October 13, to February 18, 1757 gives the following account:

> Feb. 3rd.—Early in the morning part of his (Nawab's) army appeared on their march along the road leading from Dum Dum House to the Bridge, at the distance of two miles, which they crossed and proceeded to the southward of our camp towards Calcutta, and several of their horse came within about 400 yards of our advanced battery.... At 5 in the afternoon the major part of the battalion and *seapoys* with four field pieces advanced towards the enemy in order to harrass them on their march and to discover whether they were not making some lodgment in a wood within reach of our camp; and as soon as we came abroad of this place, they began a brisk fire upon us from nine pieces of cannon, some of them thirty two pounders, which they had placed to cover their march; on this we immediately formed and returned the cannonadement which continued but a short time, it being near sunset when we began: we soon discovered the enemy draw off their cannon and proceeding on their march to their encampment; at the same time the forces returned to camp. The loss was inconsiderable on both sides; one *matross* and three *seapoys* killed and Captain Weller

and Fraser slightly wounded, eight of the enemy's horse were killed and as many men.[52]

About the happenings of the 4 February, 'Extracts from Log of the *Marlborough*' give the following account:

4 February, 1757.—Flying parties of the Nabob's army set fire to the outskirts of the town and made a general alarm. The inhabitants flocked down to the water side and got off on board the ships and we fired several shott at them while they were burning opposite to us, which dispersed them.[53]

Jean Law describes the events of the 4th a little differently. He says that 'as soon as they (the English) saw the enemy they purposely spread the alarm in Calcutta. All the women were ordered on board the ships. The country merchants and people who had entered Calcutta with the English left it.'[54]

It was on this very date (4 February) that Clive sent his envoys, Walsh and Scrafton, to the Nawab in response to his (Nawab's) solicitation of the previous day. They were to meet the Nawab at Nawabganj, according to the Journal cited above, but in the meantime the Nawab had proceeded further; he had duly intimated to Clive in his letter dated 3 February that 'place being unfit for encamping my army, for this reason my forces have marched forward and are encamped in Omichund's garden'. It was here that Clive's two nominees were presented before the Nawab. The Nawab talked to them, and bade them see the Jagat Seth's agent, who had 'something to communicate to them that would be very agreeable to the Colonel'. They had asked for a private interview with the Nawab, but the Nawab had directed them to the above agent. Scrafton later wrote the following account, in his *Reflections* (p. 64), of their first production before the Nawab: 'At seven in the evening the Soubah gave them audience in Omichund's garden, where he affected to appear in great state, attended by the best-looking men amongst his officers, hoping to intimidate them by so warlike an assembly.'

At night they retired to their tents; apparently the negotiations were to be resumed the next day. They put out their lights as if they had gone to sleep, made their escape in the darkness, and joined Clive in the camp. This was an extraordinary behaviour, and appeared absolutely inconsistent with the intentions and wishes

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 37. [53] *Ibid.*, p. 24. [54] *Ibid.*, p. 182.

expressed in the correspondence between the Nawab and Clive. Were they entrusted with some other mission? According to Jean Law, the English sent these two deputies to the Nawab 'to deceive him more completely and to examine the position of his camp'.[55] According to Clive, the two emissaries had told the Nawab 'that unless he would manifest some desire of a Peace by withdrawing his Troops from the neighbourhood of Calcutta, they could not enter upon the business they came about. The Nabob refused to comply with their proposition, and treating them with no small haughtiness they took their leave and returned to me late in the evening.'[56] Scrafton was one of the emissaries, and the account left by him does not specifically attribute haughtiness to the Nawab. That the Nawab, to quote Scrafton again, 'affected to appear in great state, attended by the best-looking men amongst his officers' does not indicate haughtiness. There is, however, plausibility in the suggestion, made on behalf of the English, that, having entered Calcutta, the Nawab intended to attack the Fort next day; and therefore the two men quietly escaped in the darkness to apprise Clive of the Nawab's intention. But what happened next day proves beyond doubt that the two deputies carried with them useful information, which led to the formulation of a masterstroke of strategey; the material point is that they carried a useful information, and not whether, as the French suggest, they 'were sent merely to spy out the camp'. They had found out the tent in which the Nawab was putting up; it was in that tent that they met him. And the strategy which was given birth to by this knowledge was that the Nawab's tent must be surprised early in the morning; the Nawab would not have the remotest apprehension of this attack as he had been left in the belief that Walsh and Scrafton were still in his camp and that they would resume negotiations the next day. The masterstroke of the strategy consisted in the hope that if the Nawab would be killed in the surprise attack, confusion would prevail, and another person, enjoying the confidence of the English, would be installed as Nawab—that person could possibly be Mir Jafar.

So, 'the next day,' says Law, 'the 5th February, at 4 or 5 a.m., in a thick fog, the English, commanded by Colonel Clive, attacked

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 182.

[56] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Clive's letter to 'The Hon'ble Secret Committee for affairs of the Hon'ble United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies', 112 F.D., pp. 74-75).

the Nawab's camp and fell precisely upon the tent in which the deputies had seen him the evening before. (I heard this from several Moorish officers who were in the Nawab's army.) Luckily for him he was not there. One of his diwans who suspected the deputation had advised him to pass the night in a tent further off.'[57] This finds confirmation in the Journal (cited above): 'An unlucky fog prevented our attack upon the Nabob's Head Quarters, which if successful would have made the action more decisive', and also in the 'Remarks on Board His Majesty's Ship *Bridgwater*'; 'our intent being to fall in with his headquarters first.'[58]

The Journal says that soon after the return of the two deputies to the English camp

> Mr. Watson's assistance was requested, and he sent Captain Warwick with between five and six hundred seamen who joined our troops about 3 o'clock in the morning (Feb. 5th); half an hour after we marched with our battalion consisting of 500 Europeans rank and file, 800 *seapoys*, six field pieces and a howitzer with 70 of the Train, and the above mentioned seamen, one half of which were employed in drawing the guns and carrying ammunition, and the other carried arms; at break of day we arrived close to the Nabob's camp before we were challenged, when we received a brisk fire from several quarters, which was returned by our advanced *seapoys*; the enemy on this retreated and we entered their camp without further resistance, and pursued our march for sometime undisturbed; but upon our approaching nearer to the centre of the camp and the Nabob's quarters our battalion was briskly charged by a body of 300 horse almost within reach of bayonet; they were received with so much coolness and such a regular fire that (very) few of them escaped; after this the whole army began to encompass us in great bodies; so we were obliged to keep up a constant fire of artillery and musketry to keep the enemy at a distance; we marched through the whole camp which took us up full two hours; and several charges were made upon our rear by the horse, but not with equal courage to the first; about 11 we arrived at the Fort and in the afternoon set out for the camp which we reached by 7 in the evening.[59]

With the withdrawal of the English to their Fort, ended the

[57] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 182. [58] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

action of 5 February. In its first rounds, the surprise attack butchered or wounded 1,300 of the Nawab's men. The loss on the British side, says the Journal, 'amounted to twenty-seven killed in the battallion and seventy wounded, twelve seamen killed and as many wounded, eighteen *seapoys* killed and fifty-five wounded'.

Why Clive decided upon the early morning attack that day is explained thus by him in his letter cited above:

> I determined to attack him (the Nawab) before day break, while two-thirds of his Army were still encamped without the Morattos [Maratha] Ditch, for when they had once passed and got into the streets of the town, it would be too late to attempt it. Another pressing reason for the immediate execution of this enterprise, notwithstanding the smallness of my Force, was the sudden distress we found ourselves in upon the approach of the Nabob's Army, by a general desertion of our workmen, coolies and servants, the breaking up of our markets and no provisions to be had but what was supplied from the Fort by water, in which condition we could not have continued long, but must have retreated into the Fort with disgrace.

At the time of writing this letter Clive still believed that the Nawab was putting up in the tent about which the deputies had given him information, and which was the main target of the English attack. He says: '... the action must have been decisive; instead of which it (the fog) thickened and occasioned our mistaking the way.'

There are conflicting accounts as to whether the Nawab, after the clash of 5 February, withdrew his army to a distance of about ten miles from Calcutta, or stayed on. Renault's account appears to be more trustworthy. He says:

> Though they (the English) sent all their soldiers, and added the crews of all their ships, and managed to surprise the Moors, they got less advantage than they expected from this combat. After having gained some ground on the enemy they could not keep it against Siraj-ud-daula, who had rallied a part of his army: they retreated in disorder and were only too fortunate in being able to put themselves under the protection of the guns of their Fort, having lost in this action nearly two hundred men. However little favourable it had been to them, as they had killed a very large number of people, having fallen upon the camp-followers' quarter, the Ministers of the Nawab,

> almost all of whom were partisans of the English, desiring only to make peace, profited by this occasion to bring the Nawab to it.[60]

There appears no doubt that the Nawab was frightened; loss of 1,300 men and the repeated demand for peace by his officers could not produce any other result. There must be something to explain why these officers who possessed a huge army against a small force of the British, were eager for peace; and that 'something' appears to be that they, already nurturing in their breasts grievances against the Nawab, had been corrupted either by money or by promises. That also appears to be the explanation of the strong wording Watson employed in the letter he wrote to the Nawab on 6 February:

> Evidences so full and positive of your bad intentions towards us, that however strong my inclinations might be towards Peace, I could no longer entertain any reasonable hopes of seeing it accomplished. I therefore desired Colonel Clive to shew you what an army of Englishmen was capable of doing, that before it was too late you might agree to the proposals, which would be made to you. . . . If you are wise, you will grant them (the English) the justice that is their due; otherwise, the sword is going to be drawn that never will be sheathed again.[61]

On the same day (6 February), Ranjeet Rai wrote to Clive:

> The Nabob agrees to give you back Calcutta with all the privileges of your phirmaund and whatever goods you lost at Cossimbuzar or elsewhere, and will grant you permission to coin *siccas* in your mint at Calcutta or Allenagur, and that you may make what fortifications you please in Calcutta. Your conduct yesterday morning greatly amazed me and put me to shame before the Nabob. . . . What has happened will occasion no difference in this affair. If you want to accommodate matters send a letter to the Nabob with your proposals, and I will get them signed and send them back to you, with a sirpah, elephant and jewels. After this the Nabob will decamp and march to Muxadavad. If you think war necessary acquaint me seriously with your intentions, and I will acquit myself of any further trouble in this affair.[62]

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 246.
[61] *Op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 212-13.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

On the 7th, Clive sent the following proposals to the Nawab:

1. That the Company be not molested upon account of such privileges as have been granted them by the King's phirmaund and Husbul Hookum, and that the phirmaund, Husbul Hookum remain in full force; that the villages were granted to the Company by the phirmaund, but detained from them by the Subahs be likewise allowed them, nor impediment or restriction be laid on the Zemindars.
2. That all goods belonging to the English Company, and having their dustick, do pass freely by land or by water in Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, without paying any duties or fees of any kind whatsoever, and that the Zemindars, Chokeydars, Guzeradars, &c., offer them no kind of molestation upon this account.
3. That restitution be made the Company of their factories and settlements at Calcutta, Cossimbazar, Dacca, &c., which have been taken from them; that all money and effects taken from the English Company, their factors and dependents at the several settlements and aurangs be restored in the same condition; that an equivalent in money be given for such goods as are damaged, plundered or lost, which shall be left to the Nabob's justice to determine.
4. That the Company be allowed to fortify Calcutta in such a manner as they shall esteem proper for their defence without any hindrance or obstruction.
5. That siccas be coin'd at Allenagur, Calcutta, in the same manner as at Muxadavad, and that if the money struck in Calcutta be of equal weight and fineness with that of Muxadavad there be no demand made for a deduction of *batta*.
6. That these proposals be ratified in the strongest manner, in the presence of God and his prophet, and sign'd and seal'd by the Nabob and some of his principal people.
7. And Admiral Charles Watson and Colonel Clive promise in behalf of the English Nation and of the English Company that from henceforth all hostilities shall cease in Bengal, and the English will observe general peace and friendship with the Nabob, as long as these articles are kept in force and remain unviolated.[63]

The Nawab countersigned the proposals, appending his own

[63] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Col. Clive's Correspondence).

notes signifying the extent to which he agreed with each of the articles. He also sent the draft of an agreement to be signed by the Governor and Council of Calcutta. The draft was:

> We the East India Company, in the presence of His Excellency the Nabob Munsur ul Mumaluk Siraja Doula, Shah Kooli Cawn Bahadur, Hybut Jung, Nazim of the provinces of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, by the hands and seal of the Council and by firm agreement and solemn attestation do declare that the business of the Company's factories within His Excellency's jurisdiction, shall go on in its former course, and that we will be obedient to the comand of the Prince; that we will never oppress or do violence to any persons without cause; that we will never offer protection to any persons, having accounts with the Government, any of the King's Talukdars, Zemindars, nor murderers nor robbers; that we will never act contrary to the tenor of the articles agreed to by the Nabob, but ever paying due obedience and submission to the Nabob will carry on our business as formerly and will never in any respect deviate from this agreement.[64]

This draft agreement, it is evident, made on the English the same demands, which had been repeatedly conveyed to them last summer (in May and June), and the absence of consent to which, brought about the attack on them. The notes, which the Nawab appended to Clive's proposals, also conveyed his disinclination to grant to the Company any additional advantages or privileges. In proposal 1, Clive provided for delivery to the Company of the villages granted to it in Emperor Farrukh-siyar's *farman*, but which, on account of their owners' unwillingness to sell, had not been delivered to the English by the then Nawab Murshid Quli Khan. To this proposal, the Nawab appended the following note: 'Article countersign'd according to former custom.' That is, the position, as it was until June last, would remain. He 'fully agreed to' the second proposal. On the third, he wrote: 'Whatever of the Company's effects are in the Nabob's possession shall be restored.' About the fourth, he said: 'Its no matter (or may be done).' The fifth brought forth this clarification from him: 'English coin shall be stampt in the name of Allenagur.' On the sixth, he noted: 'Five times the Nabob has written an answer to your proposal when the agreement shall be return'd, sign'd, and

[64] *Ibid.*

seal'd by the Governor and Council of Calcutta, then these articles shall be sign'd and seal'd in this manner.' To the seventh, he answered: 'If the great Commanders are faithful in their promises undoubtedly they will be put in execution.'[65]

The Nawab's counter draft agreement and the English proposals, as noted upon by him, were sent by Ranjeet Rai to Clive on 8 February. But just then the receipt of an alarming news from Delhi created an extraordinary situation for the Nawab, and his whole approach underwent a change. The news related to the invasion of Ahmed Shah Abdali and gave a warning that he was advancing towards Bengal. Clive says in his letter:

> Just at this time he (the Nawab) had received advice that the Afghans had defeated the Mogul, and their Leader had seized the Government assuming the title of Ahmud Shaw Shahawn Shah [Shahan-Shah, Emperor] orders were immediately issued for coins for this province to be struck in the name of the new Emperor, and the Nabob it is supposed is hurrying to his Frontiers to make an alliance with his neighbour the Nabob of Lucknapor [Lucknow], sometimes called Owd [Oudh], for their mutual Support in the present disturb'd state of the Empire.

Renault also says that 'by the fear of a Pathan invasion', the Nawab 'found himself, contrary to his own wishes, obliged to consent and even to submit to extremely hard conditions'.[66] Now he was not only prepared to sign a treaty, whatever it be, but became eager to make friends with the English. Watson wrote later: 'The alarm he (the Nawab) has lately had from the Afghans who, it is said, have taken the *Mogul* prisoner and are marching towards these Provinces, has made him apply for the assistance of our troops, which he has been promised, provided he will grant his consent to our attacking the French.' (Watson's letter, in which this expression occurs is dated 12 March 1757; it was addressed to Select Committee, Fort Saint George.)[67]

Now the trend of approach to the dispute entirely changed. On knowing that the Nawab was agreeable to sign the treaty as it was originally proposed, Clive wrote him:

> I return Your Excellency the articles of agreement which I

[65] *Ibid.* [66] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 246-7.
[67] *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 282.

request you'll let your Dewan, the King's Dewan, and some of your head Jemaidars sign and seal in the presence of God and as soon as you return the articles of agreement, sign'd and seal'd in the manner desired, the Admiral and I will send Your Excellency a paper, sign'd and seal'd by us in the presence of God, that all hostilities shall cease, that there shall be peace in the country, and that the English will be faithful to your agreement. I hope all these things will give Your Excellency satisfaction, and convince you that the English are very desirous of assisting you against all who disturb the peace of your province.[68]

The English Governor and Council signed and sealed the agreement as proposed by the Nawab after excluding one clause, that is, 'we will be obedient to the command of the Prince'. This agreement is dated 9 February 1757. On 11 February, the Nawab returned his part of the agreement, duly signed and sealed 'by the King's Dewan' (Mir Jafar), the Nawab's Dewan, and the Bakhshi of the army. With the agreement, he also sent a letter to Clive, in which he said:

I call God and his prophet to witness that I have made peace with you and with the English nation; that as long as I live I will look upon your enemies as my enemies, and when you write to me that you stand in need of my assistance I will give it you. It is necessary that your Excellency and the Noble Admiral Charles Watson and the other Chiefs of the English call God to witness, according to the manner of your own religion, that you will abide by your agreement, that you will look upon my enemies as your enemies, and that you will afford me your assistance whenever I demand it with a competent force.[69]

The Nawab again made his own notes on each article of the treaty, but this time they were almost wholly agreeable to the English. The first article, his note said, was 'agreed to according to the tenor of the *farman*', and thus gave the English all those villages which were granted to them by the imperial *farman*, but were not secured for them by Murshid Kuli Khan. To the second and the fourth articles (regarding custom-free trade and fortifica-

[68] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op.cit.*, (Col. Clive's Correspondence).
[69] *Ibid.*

tion of Calcutta) the Nawab 'agreed' entirely. On the third article (losses suffered by the Company and their factors), the Nawab appended this note: 'Whatever has been seized by the Government it is agreed shall be restored.' To the fifth (minting of coins) also he agreed, but wrote it differently thus: 'It is agreed that bullion imported by the company be coin'd into Siccas.' The other two articles were of a formal nature. The agreement was signed by Mir Jafar, Nawazish Ali Khan, and Raja Durlabh Ram, all signing in the name and on behalf of 'King Aallum Geer [Alam Gir], invincible.

Clive made the following comments on the settlement:

I have little to observe on the terms obtained from the Nabob except that they are both honorable and advantageous for the Company. The Grants of a Mint and the Villages hitherto detained from us are very considerable, and the abolishing the Duties lately exacted by the Chowkies, as well as confirming the free transportation of Goods without Customs of any kind, and the rest of the Privileges of the Royal Phirmaund are no small points gained.

The Nabob caused inventories to be taken of the Goods found at the out Settlement and Aurungs, and they are to be delivered up accordingly. He intimated privately his intentions of paying three Lack of Rupees in consideration of the Company's other Losses, as to ample restitution for what was plunder'd by his Army at Calcutta, it could not well be expected of him as he says himself in one of his letters.

The jealousies instilled into him by the French Agents made it necessary for us to conclude the Treaty with him out of hand, as well to convince him of our moderate views, which he seem'd to doubt, as to present his union with the French which was then strongly pushed on. As he must now be convinced of the consequence we are of to his affairs and of his advantage and security in a firm and close alliance with us, we may hope the Treaty will be complied with to our satisfaction, and that he will not be averse even to granting any further reasonable privileges that may be required of him in future by the Government here.

After the conclusion of the treaty, the Nawab, with his army, returned to his capital, Murshidabad.

CHAPTER NINE

The English Attack on the French : Loss of Chandra Nagar

THE INK of the treaty was not yet dry that some of the leading men of the English Company began to entertain thoughts as to whether more advantages could be extracted from the Nawab. The treaty, duly signed and annotated, was returned by the Nawab to the leaders of the Company on 11 February, and on the 12th this prospect was discussed. Says the letter of that date from Clive, Killpatrick, etc. to Select Committee, Fort William:

> We have received a note unsigned signifying to us the President's desire that we would assemble at a Committee to be held at 9 o'clock this morning or if convenient that we would give our opinions to the following questions. (1) Whether our present strength be not sufficient to force the Nabob into better terms. (2) Whether if (we) were strenuously to insist upon other advantageous articles they would not be granted.

In the reply given to item No. 1, the two military chiefs said:

> Our present insignificant strength, the situation of affairs upon the Coast, the absolute recallment of Colonel Clive with the greatest part of the forces, obliges us to give it as our opinion that by insisting upon terms still more advantageous we expose the Company to the risque of losing those already granted them.

They were very much conscious of their poor strength and of the circumstances under which the Nawab hurriedly concluded a treaty, and were not prepared to hazard a war with him. For, they add:

> We are the more confirmed in this way of thinking as Rungeet Roy [Rajit Rai] the Seat's [Seths'] vakeel, who has through the whole course of this negotiation undertaken the Company's affairs, in his last letter to Colonel Clive declares that if the last articles signed by the Nabob are not satisfactory he will

interfere no more in the Company's business but let war take its course.

Therefore to item No. 2, they replied:

> To the 2nd we are of opinion other articles may be asked not demanded, and that a gentleman deputed to the Nabob who understands the language and the customs of the country may not only be a means of getting them granted but likewise be of great use in many other matters both public and private which cannot be so properly done in writing.[1]

Fort Saint George, in their letter dated 21 February, (though this letter had been written after Calcutta had been recaptured and before the news had reached Madras that a treaty had been concluded between the Nawab and the English) also warned Fort William against prolonged hazardous involvement in Bengal. It said: 'We are of opinion that neither the Company's force nor cash is sufficient to carry on hostilities in Bengal, and be at the same time so prepared to resist the efforts of the French on this Coast as a war between the two nations requires.'[2]

Thus, evidently enough, it was prudent consciousness of the weak position of the English in Bengal and apprehension of Anglo-French clash both on the Coromandal Coast and in Bengal, rather than inclination to observe the terms of the treaty scrupulously, that compelled Clive and others to keep up an appearance of friendship with the Nawab. But the ambition to obtain more concessions and liberal implementation of the terms from the Nawab remained, and with the object of creating a favourable atmosphere in the Nawab's court, Watts was deputed as the Company's accredited envoy to reside at the Bengal Government's headquarters at Murshidabad. Watts was given (in Select Committee, Fort William's letter dated 16 February 1757 to him) ten specific instructions, and also 'full power to act' in regard to any other 'particulars' that 'should occur' to him 'for the benefit of' the Company. Of the ten items, the following are those in which the demands to be made, exceeded the terms of the treaty. Watts was asked:

> As the Nabob has consented to our *dustucks* passing in the

[1] Hill, *Bengal in 1756-57*, vol. II, pp. 222-3.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 235.

country without being liable to any tax, fee or imposition from the *chokeys*, we doubt not he will permit us to punish the offenders of this article ourselves without a tedious complaint at the *Durbar*. You must endeavour therefore to obtain his permission for doing it as we esteem it very material.

We think the article of restitution is by the Nabob worded in a very loose manner. On your arrival therefore at Muxadavad, you must desire an exact account of all moneys, goods, and effects entered in the Nabob's *sircarry*. But as the Nabob must be sensible the Company's servants and prive inhabitants have lost an immense sum in money and goods, of which no account has been given in his Books, it is but reasonable and just some restitution should be made them. . . . We shall depend upon you therefore to use your utmost endeavours upon this occasion; but if you find it impossible to procure that satisfaction, you must acquaint him that a large value may by his authority be collected from principal men in his service who have plundered our effects without his knowledge.

Should private restitution be refused, you must press the Nabob to take upon himself the discharge of all debts due from the English to his subjects or to the natives in general, as his violence and the pillage his people made have incapacitated us from paying those debts.

Could we obtain a promise from the Nabob that he will not erect any fortifications below Calcutta within a mile of the river, it would be very useful but there is no necessity to demand this concession.[3]

While the English were manoeuvring to re-establish themselves more firmly and more effectively and had their own political plans for the future, the Nawab found himself surrounded by his own worries. He was painfully conscious that he had conceded extraordinary terms to the English; the Nawab of Cuttack was understood to be making preparations to attack Bengal with a view to acquiring the rulership of the latter province, and was reported to have contacted the Marathas for help;[4] the reported advance of Abdali was already hanging over his head like a sword. He employed all the diplomacy he was capable of in meeting this situa-

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 225-6.

[4] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Clive's letter dated 1 February 1757 to the Company's Secret Committeé in England, Correspondence, p. 73).

tion. He requested Clive (14 February) to despatch to him twenty-five artillery soldiers along with Watts;[5] he also 'hinted to the Colonel that he would pay the charges of maintaining 500 Europeans in Garrison, on condition he should be assisted when he was invaded by foreign Enemies or disturb'd by intestine troubles'.[6] He appointed Omi Chand to act as his emissary between the Company and himself as was Watts on behalf of the former. A pitiable victim of circumstances, the Nawab also offered very alluring concessions to the French with a view to gaining their friendship. A French letter gives the following account of these concessions:

> As a proof of the good will he (*the Nawab*) had for us he promised to restore the 3 *lakhs* which he took from us in June 1756, and even gave us 1 *lakh* on the spot. ... In sending this money he granted us also very advantageous privileges—the one allowing us to mint *sicca* rupees in Chandernagore ... and the other allowing all Frenchmen to trade freely throughout the country on the same footing and on the same terms as the Company. ... He had also allowed us to fortify ourselves as we liked, not merely in the Fort but also in the town, and on the representation we made him of our fear of being besieged by the English he forbade them to commit any act of hostility within his peace (i.e. dominions) and sent 2,000 of his soldiers to our succour.[7]

The Nawab had granted those extraordinary concessions to the English in a state of expediency and helplessness, and if he granted similar ones to the French willingly, it was apparently with the intention of neutralising the superior position which the English acquired because of them in the past and would acquire in the future. But, as we shall presently see, the Nawab's intention was not mischievous, that is, he was not designing a clash between the two European powers by economically and militarily helping the French; his aim was to maintain peace, which, in his opinion, could be obtained by raising the French from their position of vincibility—a position which might prompt, and which was, in-

[5] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 223.
[6] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Fort William's letter dated 22 February 1757 to the Secret Committee in England, Correspondence, p. 81).
[7] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 301 (Letter dated 29 March 1957 from Council, Chandra Nagar, to the Directors General of the India Company).

deed, prompting the English to seize Chandra Nagar, before it was reinforced by the expected succour from the French settlement at Pondicherry. The French were doing their utmost to avoid a clash, but since the prospects gravitated more towards it than towards peace, they were leaning more and more on the intervention of the Nawab either for peace or for his support should a clash eventually come off. On the other hand, the English interest obviously lay in preventing the Nawab from doing either. Therefore both, the French and the English, started intrigues at the Nawab's court in pursuance of their respective aims. Omi Chand, who had fallen from grace in the estimation of the Fort William authorities just before the seizure of Calcutta by the Nawab, and had, ever since the victorious re-appearance of the English in Calcutta early in January, been endeavouring to win back their confidence so that he might again establish his lucrative trade with the Company, was the first to offer his services for the promotion of the English designs. His first act of treachery is mentioned in Watts' letter to Clive, dated 18 February:

> Omichund is returned from Hughley, and has had a meeting with Nuncomar [Nand Kumar], who is *duan* and in the place of phousda [Faujdar] of Hughly, who informs him, that Seva Baboo, Coja Wazed's *duan*, and Mutrau Mul, Narain Singh's nephew, arrived yesterday from the Nabob, with a present of a lack of rupees from the Nabob to the French Company, with orders to Nuncomar to assist the French with all his force, in case the English should attack Chandernagor, or if the French should attack the English, to assist them in the same manner, that there may be no quarrels or disputes in this country. Omichund upon this advises the attacking of Chandernagor immediately, and not to be apprehensive of the Nabob, and says he is certain that there is not above three hundred matchlockmen in Hughly, that he has concerted measures with Nuncomar, who has engaged to delay matters, so as to prevent any assistance coming to the French from the Nabob for these fourteen days or more, and he says you may depend on it when you are once engaged with the French no one will come to the assistance of either party. Further Omichund has promised in behalf of the English that if Nuncomar keeps neuter, and by his policy prevents any assistance arriving from the Nabob to the French, that we will then make him a present of ten or twelve thousand rupees, and use our interest to continue him

in the Government of Hughly. If you approve of giving this present, all that you have to say to the bearer of this letter is, *Golaub que Foul* [Gulab Ke Phool], or "a rose flower"; with which message Nuncomar will be satisfied that you comply with the agreement made by Omichund.[8]

The buying of an important person like Nand Kumar[9] was a gain of considerable consequence to the English. But for the time being Clive and Watson considered it wise to submit to the wishes of the Nawab meekly, and therefore, instead of being tempted to the offers made in Watts' letter (quoted above), they abided by the Nawab's orders not to make war on the French. This is evident from the letters exchanged between the Nawab and the English. On 19 February, the Nawab, getting information of the English intention to invade the French at Chandra Nagar, wrote to Watson: 'You have ... sent me an agreement under your own hand and seal not to disturb the tranquillity of my country, but it now appears that you have a design to besiege the French Factory near Houghley, and to commence hostilities against that nation .... If you are determined to besiege the French Factories, I shall be necessitated in honour and duty to my King to assist them with my troops.'[10]

In reply to this letter, Watson said (21 February): 'Had I imagined it would have given you any umbrage, I should never have entertained the least thoughts of disturbing the tranquillity of your country, by acting against that nation within the Ganges; and am now ready to desist from attacking their Factory or committing other hostilities against them in these provinces.'[11]

This ready willingness to respect the wishes and orders of the Nawab was dictated by the fear that another rupture with the Nawab, in which the French would certainly join with him, might prove disastrous to the English. But the ambition to destroy the French with the object of obviating chances of a Nawab-French junction in the future remained, and leading Englishmen's energies and ability to manoeuvre were devoted to bringing about a situation in which the object might be pursued without antagonising the Nawab. In the drama that was prepared within three weeks and played as battle for Chandra Nagar in the middle of March, Watts played a spectacular role, with Omi Chand as his playback

[8] I*bid.*, pp. 228-9.
[9] During the battle for Chandra Nagar, Nand Kumar was bribed thrice (Forrest, *The Life of Lord Clive*, pp. 371 and 398).
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 230. [11] *Ibid.*, p. 231.

adviser. On 20 February, Omi Chand met the Nawab, and when, during the interview, the Nawab suggested to him that the English were violating the treaty they had concluded with him, Omi Chand told him that 'he had lived under the English protection these forty years, that he never knew them once to break their agreement, ... that if a lie could be proved in England upon any one, they were spit upon and never trusted'. So that his words might be fully trusted by the Nawab, Omi Chand 'took his oath by touching a Brahmin's foot', thus giving religious sanctity to what he had said. Omi Chand also asked the Nawab to 'consider and reflect on what are the motives and reasons for Monsieur Boussi's coming into this country with a large land force', thus trying to create an impression that it was the French who had aggressive intentions. The letter (dated 21 February to the Select Committee, Fort William) in which Watts gives these accounts, was written 'under a tree in a hurry' 'near Agadeep', at 2 p.m. Upon Omi Chand's advocacy of the English cause, Watts goes on to say 'the Nabob was (so) well pleased that though before he had ordered Meir Jaffeir himself to the assistance of the French, and proposed returning himself, he countermanded that order and sent a message by Omychaund to me to write to you that what men he had already sent down was only to garrison Hughly, and that he would give orders we should not be molested'.[12]

Watts, according to his Memoir, bribed Raja Ram, the chief of the Nawab's intelligence department,[13] and thus created a source through which he kept himself posted with hourly developments. On 25 February, on the basis of the information he gathered, Watts sent word to the Select Committee of Fort William saying that the present was the most opportune time to invade Chandra Nagar. He said:

> By what I can learn of the Nabob's disposition there is not the least stress to be laid on his word or oath, and, when the squadron and troops [the help received from Madras in December 1756] are gone and his apprehensions of us cease, he will evade complying with any part of his contract. His governing principle or reigning passion is fear, and by that alone is he to be swayed, therefore if we attack and take Chandernagore every part of our agreement will be fulfilled and more indulgences granted us. If we are unsuccessful we shall get nothing, and if a neutrality is concluded with the French no chicanery, artifice, or cunning

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 232. [13] *Ibid.*, pp. 255-6.

will be left untried to delay putting us in possession of what the Nabob has assented to.[14]

Really, the time factor was of great importance to the English. A pressing demand had just then arrived from Fort Saint George for the return of Clive and the troops that had arrived with him in December. This is what the Select Committee of Fort Saint George wrote on 21 February to the Select Committee of Fort William: (This letter must have reached Calcutta sometime in March, but the outbreak of war between England and France had already made the Fort Saint George men in Bengal anxious about the Company's weak position in the south.)

> Far from being able to supply you with more men we have unguarded a great part of the Company's Establishments on this Coast by the large detachment already sent you. Our northern Settlements are at the daily mercy of a French army, which by the last advices was within two days' march of Vizagapatam. The southward provinces assigned to the Company have suffered continual ravages, and are now involved in such troubles that the preservation of them is doubtful; and our Settlements, not excepting the Presidency, are barely in a state of defence against the present force of Pondicherry, where luckily only two ships have yet arrived, but if we may credit reports many more are expected. Therefore, Gentlemen, we think ourselves indispensably obliged to repeat our injunctions to Colonel Clive to return here before the season is too late with as many troops as he judges can be spared from the defence of Calcutta, and we request that you yield him all the assistance he may apply to you for on this occasion.[15]

But the British auxiliary force was still in Bengal and would not leave until the affairs had been settled, and therefore the French, who were conscious of their weak position, proposed to the English a treaty of neutrality. A distressing uncertainty had seized the mind of their chief, Renault, who, after the conclusion of the treaty between the Nawab and the English—Renault believed that the Nawab had made an abject surrender—was not prepared to place faith in the Nawab. He would prefer a treaty of neutrality with the English if that could be achieved. The following gives an idea of how his mind was working then:

[14] *Ibid.* [15] *Ibid.*, p. 234.

> The Nawab's envoy further gave me to understand that he was, in his heart, enraged with the English, and continued to regard them as his enemies. In spite of this we saw clearly from the treaty just made (with the English) that we should be its victims, and knowing Siraj-ud-daula's character, his promise to assist me strongly if the English attacked us did not quiet my mind.[16]

Therefore, 'after the treaty of peace between the English and the Nawab', the French Council of Chandra Nagar 'sent two Councillors to compliment the Admiral (Watson) on the success of his arms and to propose to him to ratify the neutrality which had always existed in the Ganges between the European nations'. But Watson was reported to have told the French deputies 'that he would conclude nothing until the French nation had made an offensive and defensive agreement against the Nawab with the English'. The French deputies 'represented' to Watson: 'We could not bind ourselves to such an engagement without being authorised thereto by the Superior Council of Pondicherry on whom we were absolutely dependent.' Watson then told him that 'it was useless for the deputies to propose a neutrality to him if' they 'could conclude nothing' on their own authority.[17]

The terms of treaty had already been drafted separately by both sides, and Clive, who was anxious to leave for Madras with as much troops as could be spared by Fort William, asked for Watson's approval to the draft treaty as formulated by the Select Committee of Fort William. But Watson, who first insisted on an 'offensive and defensive' treaty against the Nawab, now 'refuses', to quote Clive, 'to agree to any neutrality until the articles return ratified from Pondicherry'.[18] In fact, a conventional treaty of 'neutrality had already existed'; and it was ostensibly in conformity with this convention that the French allowed British forces to pass by their settlement of Chandra Nagar, when they were marching to re-capture their possessions. What the French wanted was only a formal ratification of the neutrality which was necessitated by the recent distrust between the two nations; and therefore, while an 'offensive and defensive' treaty needed authorisation by the French Superior Council at

[16] Quoted in Hill, *Three Frenchmen in Bengal,* pp. 27-8.
[17] Hill, vol. III, *op. cit.,* pp. 229-30. (From 'Translation of Extracts from a Manuscript' entitled "Revolution in Bengal").
[18] Hill, vol. II, *op cit.,* pp. 266-7 (Clive's letter dated 3 March 1757 to Fort Saint George).

Pondicherry, the one now proposed could have been concluded by the French in Bengal. But Watson, on this excuse, vetoed the resolution of the Select Committee of the English at Fort William, and also put forward the same excuse before the Nawab, who too was promoting chances of a treaty. He wrote to the Nawab:

> Immediately on the receipt of one of your past letters I not only gave over all thoughts of attacking the French, but invited them to enter into a treaty of neutrality and to send people here to settle the terms; but judge what must have been my surprize, when after they were in some manner settled, the French deputies owned that they had no power to secure to us the observance of the treaty, in case any commander of their should come with a great power after my departure! You are too reasonable not to see, that it is impossible for me to conclude a treaty with people who have no power to do it; and which besides, while it ties my hands, leaves those of my enemies at liberty to do me what mischief they can.[19]

Watson also made out a plausible case for the English invasion of Chandra Nagar. Just then the Nawab had received news that an imperial invading army was marching towards Bengal, and he sought British assistance to proceed with him to Patna. In a way, the circumstance which compelled him to treat with the English hurriedly on 9 February 1757, seemed to be appearing again, and Watson wrote to him:

> You ask our assistance. Can we with the least degree of prudence march with you, and leave our enemies behind us? You will then be too far off to support us, and we shall be unable to defend ourselves. Think what can be done in this situation. I see but one way. Let us take Chandernagore, and secure ourselves against any apprehensions from that quarter, and then we will assist you with every man in our power, and go with you even to Delhi if you will.[20]

At this time serious differences arose between Watson and the Select Committee of Fort William as to the policy to be adopted in dealing with the situation. The Select Committee repeatedly

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 263-4 (Written towards the end of February—exact date missing).
[20] *Ibid.*

represented to Watson to agree to the signing of a treaty of neutrality without any loss of time. Clive, one of the Select Committee, believed (as he wrote in his letter dated 1 March 1757, to Watts) that the Nawab would 'abide by the agreement so solemnly sworn to'.[21] But Watson confronted the Select Committee with questions suggesting that the Nawab had no intention to fulfil the terms of the treaty. He said in his letter dated 3 March to them:

> It is now three weeks since the Peace commenced in which many Articles were promised by him. Are they yet complied with? Give me leave to go a little further and ask when they will be complied with? I am afraid it is too difficult a question to be answered with any degree of exactness. Is it reasonable then to suppose if the Nabob should sign this guarantee and swear to the observance of it, that he will pay any more regard to that than he has done to the fulfilling the several Articles of the Peace?[22]

Since the Anglo-French draft treaty provided that neutrality should be guaranteed by the Nawab, Watson suggested that it was futile to depend on a man (the Nawab) who had not yet fulfilled the obligations the Anglo-Nawab treaty imposed on him. He therefore advised the Select Committee that the Nawab should not 'be addressed on this subject (of neutrality) till he has faithfully fulfilled all the Articles of the Peace'.[23]

Watson was in fact preparing ground[24] for an invasion of the French settlement at Chandra Nagar; this is evident from his letter to the Nawab. Finding that the Nawab was expeditiously preparing to meet the imperial invasion and was perplexed, Watson served on him an ultimatum on 4 March, in which he said:

> If you are really desirous of preserving your country in peace and your subjects from misery and ruin, in ten days from the date of this, fulfil your part of the treaty in every Article, that I may not have the least cause of complaint: otherwise, remember, you must answer for the consequences: and as I have always acted the open, unreserved part in all my dealings with

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 265. [22] *Ibid.*, p. 269. [23] *Ibid.*

[24] As far back as November 1756, Watson had been advised by the select committee of Fort Saint George 'to dispossess the French of Chandernagore, if he thinks it practicable' 'Letter dated 14 November 1756, Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 302).

you, I now acquaint you that the remainder of the troops, which should have been here long since (and which I hear the Colonel told you he expected) will be at Calcutta in a few days; that in a few days more I shall dispatch a vessel for more ships and more troops; and that I will kindle such a flame in your country, as all the water in the Ganges shall not be able to extinguish.[25]

What Clive said at the same time (in his letter dated 4 March to the Select Committee, Fort William) presents a striking contrast:

Do but reflect Gentlemen, what will be the opinion of the world of these our late proceedings? Did we not in consequence of a letter received from the Governor and Council of Chandernagore making offers of a neutrality within the Ganges, in a manner accede to it by desiring they would send deputies, and that we would gladly come into such a neutrality with them? and have we not since their arrival drawn out Articles that were satisfactory to both parties and agreed that such Articles should be reciprocally signed, sealed and sworn to? What will the Nabob think after the promises made him on our side and after his consenting to guarantee this neutrality? He and all the world will certainly think that we are men of a trifling, insignificant disposition, or that we are men without principles.[26]

Watson's intransigence over the proposals of neutrality forced Clive to think of invasion of Chandra Nagar, and, seemingly unaware of what Watson had written to the Nawab (4 March), he asked the Select Committee (in his letter cited above): 'I must therefore request you will join with me in desiring Mr. Watson a third time to ratify the neutrality in the manner agreed upon, and if he refuses, to desire, he will attack Chandernagore by water immediately, as I am ready to do by land with the forces under my command.'[27] (It is worth while to recall here that after the breakdown of the first proposal for treaty, and until the negotiations started for a simple 'neutrality within the Ganges', even the Select Committee favoured an attack on Chandra Nagar. Drake, Clive and Becher said it in their letter dated 22 February 1757, to the Secret Committee in England: 'For this end the Admiral and Colonel concerted measures to attack Chandernagore by sea and Land, and our Troops have crossed the River, but yesterday arrived

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 273.
[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 271-2.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 272.

three Letters from the Nabob to Admiral Watson, Colonel Clive and Major Killpatrick forbidding them to commit hostilities within his dominions, to prevent which and procure peace and quiet to his country he had so readily consented to the late Treaty. ... Upon taking this affair under consideration we have thought it advisable not to hazard a second rupture with the Nabob, as the Company's Affairs are far from being settled here or well situated on the Coast.'[28]

While Clive had now abandoned his efforts to persuade Watson to agree to a neutrality and decided upon invasion of Chandra Nagar, the Select Committee of Fort William (which included him) kept up the French credulity by conveying to them a false report:

> We are sorry it was not in our power to expedite the treaty of neutrality .... The delay was owing to some difference in sentiments with Vice-Admiral Watson. That gentleman has now consented to ratify the treaty provided another Article be inserted by which you oblige yourselves to send no ships abroad till the arrival of the ratification from Pondicherry.[29]

Watson did not consent to the ratification, and definitely stated that until the treaty was ratified by Pondicherry, it would have no meaning, and that there was risk in waiting; therefore to him all talk of neutrality was meaningless. All leading Englishmen were now of one mind: if the projected invasion of Chandra Nagar was postponed, the English might have to face a disaster, perhaps greater than that of June 1756. A number of British soldiers had gone over to the French and taken service with them. They did not return even after Clive had remonstrated with the French chief Renault. On 9 March, Clive had written to the French: 'I am sorry you give me so much reason to complain of your ungenteel behaviour in inticing away our soldiers and sailors ... neither the Admiral nor myself shall ever be satisfied, till every man of them is delivered up to us.' At the same Clive repeated his promise: 'I very sincerely declare to you, that at this present time I have no intention to attack your Settlement. If I should alter my mind, I shall not fail to advice you of it.'[30] That this was a ruse played on the French is evident from Clive's

[28] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Correspondence, p. 81).
[29] Hill, *Bengal in 1756-57*, vol. II, p. 276.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 277.

letter to Nand Kumar, of the previous date (8 March) when he had already started with his army towards Chandra Nagar:

> I am now in peace and friendship with the Nabob, and agreeable to his desire am marching with my army to join him at Muxadabad. I write this that you may not be alarmed at my approach. Rest assured that I have given the strictest orders that no person in my army shall in any wise molest your tenants. ... Do you on your part give orders to all the tenants within your jurisdiction to attend with a *buzar* to furnish my army with a plenty of provisions.[31]

Nand Kumar had already been bought over for the British by Omi Chand, and if Clive still wrote the above letter, it was because he wanted to take his own precaution. Clive had concealed the real purpose from Nand Kumar understandably because it would not have been better served by revealing his secret. Clive began his march at a very favourable moment. 'Part of the Nabob's army' (as Clive says in his letter dated 11 March 1757 to Pigot, chief of Fort Saint George) had already left for Patna, and (he adds) the Nawab 'himself will leave Muxadabad very soon with the rest'.[32] Watts had also sent word from Murshidabad to the Select Committee (in his letter dated 10 March) saying that he had met the Nawab that very day and that 'the Nawab said he could not write, but desired I would inform you that if you was determined to attack the French, he would not intermeddle or give them the least assistance, he only requests to be informed of your sentiments three or four days before you begin upon action'.[33] In the same letter Watts gives an account of how the Nawab was quickly complying with the provisions of the Anglo-Nawab treaty:

> He (the Nawab) has ordered Juggutseat to pay me twenty thousand gold *moors*, [Mohurs worth at that time about sixteen rupees each] who waits till he receives it from the Nabob's treasury, and which he hourly expects; part of the money I hope to receive to-morrow; the Nabob has positively ordered his mutsuddies to be expeditious in delivering over the goods and effects he has in his possession, and his writers to write *perwannahs* agreeable to his agreement; he desires according to the terms of the *phirmaund*, you will send for the *Zemindars*; purchase

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 275. [32] *Ibid.*, p. 280. [33] *Ibid.*, p. 278.

> and take possession of the 38 villages;[34] if they should apprehend the Nabob's anger for selling them, acquaint me and I will get them the Nabob's order; the Nabob says you may coin *siccas* in Calcutta whenever you please, and swore this morning before me by God and his Prophet he would comply with every part of his contract.[35]

Watts also conveyed to the Select Committee in the same letter that Ranjit Roy (the man who prominently figured in the negotiations between the Nawab and the English before the treaty of 9 February was signed) would have to be paid 10 per cent on three lakhs of rupees the Nawab would pay to the Company. Watts says: Ranjit Roy 'is a man of sense and weight, and in great favour with the Nabob, and has it much in his power to expedite our business, without whose assistance we shall meet with many obstructions and obstacles from the Nabob's Ministers'.[36]

While the invasion of Chandra Nagar was imminent, belief still prevailed in Murshidabad, particularly in the mind of the Nawab, that the Anglo-French affair would be settled peaceably. According to Jean Law, the Nawab's Court had been bought over and demoralised and presented to him a picture absolutely contrary to the facts. He says:

> The English had on their side all the chief officers in the army of the Nawab, Mir Jafar Ali Khan, Khodadad Khan Latty, and a number of others whom their presents and the influence of the Seths attached to them, all the Ministers of the old Court disgraced by Sirajuddaula, nearly all the secretaries, the writers of the *Durbar* and even the eunuchs of the harem. What effect could they not expect from all these forces united and put in motion by a man so skilful as Mr. Watts?[37]

Even the big bankers (the so-called Jagat Seths), to whom the French owed heavy amounts of money and who feared of losing it in the event of the English coming out triumphant from the impending action and consequently used their pressure in favour of neutrality, were won over by Clive who made a promise that all their losses would be made good by the English. Thus, says

[34] These were the villages which were included in the Mughal Emperor's *farman* of 1717, but not delivered to the English by Murshid Quli Khan.
[35] Hill, *Bengal in 1756-57*, vol. II, p. 278.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 279. [37] Hill, *op. cit.*, part III, p. 191.

Law, 'the cause of the English had become that of the Seths'.[38] Amusingly enough, until four or five days after Clive had left with his forces for Chandra Nagar, the Nawab was still telling Law that he would not allow the English and French 'to make war in a country under his rule and that he was determined that the neutrality should be preserved as it had always been'.[39] That was what he told both Law and Watts. Though Clive was now determined to carry out the plan of invasion, he still felt the lack of the Nawab's consent, and this lack was made good by Watts. Watson received a letter from the Nawab (dated 10 March) in which the latter stated: 'You have understanding and generosity: if your enemy with an upright heart claims your protection, you will give him his life, but then you must be well satisfied of the innocence of his intentions; if not, whatever you think right, that do.'[40] This letter, Law says, was a forged one, and was obtained by Watts from the Nawab's secretary, 'who', says Hill on the authority of Watts' *Memoirs,* 'was in Mr. Watts' pay'.[41] That the Nawab did not permit the English to attack the French and that the paragraph quoted above from the secretary's letter seems to have been written in excess of the instructions given by the Nawab, can also be inferred from the Nawab's letter of the next day (11 March) to Clive, in which he says that he was impatiently waiting for the arrival of the Colonel at Murshidabad; he says nothing about Chandra Nagar.[42] A positive proof is provided by the Nawab's letter dated 15 March to Clive, in which he says:

> I have often before wrote to you that you should not make war with the French. I am steady to my agreement and have therefore paid Mr. Watts 3 lack of rupees, and have given to Mr. Watts the perwannahs necessary for the trade of all your factorys as his letters will inform you. It was for the good of my subjects and of my country that I have made peace. If war is still to subsist how can my country flourish. It is not proper that you should ever fight in the river. Let there be peace between you in some manner, and I shall be very well pleas'd, if not I shall be displeas'd. Since the factorys have subsisted, there never was any war in the river. If you presist in making war, I shall from thence conclude you have no intention of trading in this country and that you seek for a pretence to raise troubles. I send Mutra-

[38] *Ibid.,* p. 186. [39] *Ibid.,* p. 195.
[40] Hill, *op. cit.,* vol. II, p. 279. [41] *Ibid.,* vol. I, p. clxii.
[42] *Ibid.,* vol. II, p. 280.

mul to you whom I have great confidence in. He shall settle peace between you and the French. By this you will know it must be done.[43]

Throughout the proceedings over the Anglo-French affair, the Nawab is found endeavouring most earnestly to maintain peace in his dominions. He does not betray any intention of making common cause with the French in order to drive out the English —there is nothing to suggest that he did so in Law's long *Memoir*. It was this wish—peace at any cost—that characterises his entire conduct since the conclusion of the treaty of 9 February. He tells Law, during the period of the Anglo-French tension, that the peace he made with the English 'was nothing less than sincere'.[44] When he promises his help to the French to protect them from an English attack, he regrets that 'these English, who are unfortunate, will be punished for the disturbance they have raised'.[45] In his letter dated 8 March to Clive, while underrating the fighting power of the French in comparison with that of the English, he expresses the hope: 'You will not act contrary to former customs in committing hostilities upon a rival within my dominions.'[46] Should the peace be broken in spite of his pacific efforts, he had earnestly intended and made it known that he would put his weight on the side of the victim. This attitude he was maintaining in spite of his experience of the French in the past and lack of steadfastness in their own minds and affairs about the present. As Law says, 'they were afraid at Chandernagore to excite the jealousy of the English by a too open understanding with the Nawab'.[47] When the hostilities were about to break out, the Nawab asked Law two questions at a private meeting, in order to find out the depth of the French's seriousness to fight the English: (1) why the French did not assist him when he marched in January against the English, although they could easily do so this time because of the existence of war between England and France; and (2) why had Bussy, the celebrated French army officer in the south (who, on the eve of the Anglo-French war Chandra Nagar, 'advanced to the very gates' of Bengal[48]) was hesitating to come to the assistance of his compatriots in Bengal? No satisfactory answer seems to have been given; in

[43] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.,* (Col. Clive's Correspondence).
[44] Hill, *op. cit.,* vol. III, p. 187.
[45] *Ibid.,* vol. II, p. 264 (letter to Bussy).
[46] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.,* (Col. Clive's Correspondence).
[47] Hill, *op. cit.,* vol. III, p. 188 (Law's *Memoir*).
[48] *Ibid.*

fact Law himself regrets, in his *Memoir*, that Bussy should have behaved in that manner. Law says if Bussy 'had appeared ... the whole country would have escaped from the English'.[49]

On 13 March, Clive served a formal notice on the French, and asked Renault 'to surrender the fort of Chandernagore' to the English. This, of course, could not bring forth the surrender, and on 14 March, the fighting started. Just at this time the Nawab was relieved of his fear of Ahmad Shah Abdali, and he wrote to Clive (on 15 March): 'By the blessing of God I have now letters of peace from Ahmad Khan Abdally, and I have also wrote him answers, and the resolution I had taken of marching to Patna is altered'.[50] On the same date in another letter he asked Clive: 'I therefore write you that you put a stop to your coming, and whatever place you are at that you return from thence towards Calcutta.'[51] It was on this very date that the Nawab also wrote to Clive warning him: 'If you persist in making war, I shall from thence conclude you have no intention of trading in this country and that you seek for a pretence to raise troubles.' When these letters reached Clive, he was in the thick of a deadly battle; soldiers and officers were dropping off dead on both sides. Clive therefore wrote a very submissive letter to the Nawab (on 20 March) in which he said:

> It shocks me to think what falsities my enemies make use of to deprive me of your favour. God is my judge that I will be firm and steady to my promises, and that I shall be always ready to support you with my life. ... There is not a man in your Durbar who is more sincere and zealous in his attachment to your interest and welfare than myself. ... Let me have a place in your breast that is enlighten'd like the sun, and look on me as one always ready to loose the last drop of my blood in your service.[52]

Before this letter reached the Nawab, he had again written to Clive (18 March) reiterating what he had said earlier:

The agreement that has been so firmly settled between us, I thank God, has not been any way deviated from on my side, and I mean firmly to adhere to it. But you, notwithstanding

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 187 fn.
[50] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 286. [51] *Ibid.*
[52] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Clive's Correspondence, No. 79).

your agreement, and notwithstanding my forbidding it and contrary to all former customs you persist in making war in the river; therefore as I am the Governor of the King's provinces, and that his subjects who pay the revenues may not be trod under foot by your army I have determined to march that way. But if you mean to carry on the Company's business, put a stop to the war on ye river and carry on your trade as formerly, for which purpose I have given all the necessary orders. I am always ready to assist you on every side. God and his prophet are always present to me in all my actions. The war shall never be begun on my side, yet it is necessary that I should be careful of my subjects'.[53]

Clive gave the following reply (22 March) to the above letter:

> Mutramul carrys my answer to your several parwannahas that I rec'd with great pleasure; by this you will be acquainted with my sincere attachment to your Excellency. If you are determin'd to march this way I cannot forbid it, but I should be very sorry to see the troubles renew'd as I persuade myself you will have pleasure in hearing good tidings from me.[54]

The element of threat in this letter becomes vividly visible in spite of the sweet coating of humility. But on the same day, Clive wrote a more challenging letter to Rai Durlabh Ram, who, Clive learnt, had 'arrived within 25 miles of' Hugli, with an army of 10,000.' He said: 'Whether you are come as a friend or an enemy I know not, if as the latter say so at once, and I'll send some out to fight you immediately. If as the former, I beg you will stay where you are, for we can conquer the enemies we have to deal with here if they were ten times stronger.'[55] Eventually, it was Clive's threat and not the Nawab's that prevaited, and none of the latter's forces appeared on the battlefield, in spite of constant persuasions of Law who met the Nawab daily during the period of the fighting. When the town of Chandra Nagar fell to the English, and the Fort was still holding out, Law's anxiety naturally increased, but his entreaties to the Nawab brought forth no response. In his *Memoir*, Law says:

> The English had gained over Nand Kumar, Faujdar of Hugli, who wrote to the Nawab anything they thought proper to

[53] *Ibid.*, (No. 81). [54] *Ibid.*, (No. 84). [55] *Ibid.*, (No. 83).

dictate to him. ... The Seths and several of the *diwans*, who had been consulted on the change, had represented that it would not be proper to send any reinforcements, that the English, who had made themselves masters of the town in so short a time, would be masters of the Fort in less than two days, and would then come and attack the Nawab in Murshidabad itself, and that it was the part of prudence not to irritate them, on which the order was given to Rai Durlabh Ram not to start. They even brought back all the troops which had marched out as well as the artillery which had already advanced a long distance.[56]

Law attributes the Nawab's reluctance, in spite of his inclination to help the French, to his fear of the English. The other, or an additional reason, might be that the Nawab's experience of the French in the past cautioned him against embroiling himself on their behalf. Law's suggestion that fear was an overbearing consideration with the Nawab cannot, however, be wholly ruled out, for most of those high ranking advisers upon whom a ruler depends for advice and action were either in the pay of the English or expected wholesome rewards in the future. Whispers about the English setting up a new Nawab had already started; and when Law acquainted 'the Nawab with what was hatching against him ... the poor young man began to laugh, being unable to imagine that I could be so silly as to indulge in such ideas'.[57]

There were, at this time, 10,000 men under Rai Durlabh Ram at Plassey, 4,000 or 5,000 under Manik Chand still nearer, and a strong garrison under Nand Kumar at Hugli; all these remained mere onlookers while two European nations were fighting and when definite prospect of the victory of the English arms over the French should have served as a warning that after the close of the Anglo-French affair the English would emerge stronger and could constitute a danger to the Nawab himself!

On 23 March, the French surrendered. According to Ghulam Husain Khan's *Seir Mutaqherin*, the English victory was hastened or brought to a decision by Frenchman De Terraneau betraying the secret of the river passage to Watson. Khan says that a few weeks later, Terraneau sent home part of the reward of his treachery to his father in France. 'The old man returned the money with indignant comments on his son's conduct, and De

[56] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 196-7.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Terraneau committed sucide in despair.'[58] This is confirmed by an account later collected by Hill in which it is stated that Terraneau's son 'was in receipt of a small pension from the East India Company'.[59]

[58] Hill, *Three Frenchmen in Bengal,* p. 41.
[59] Hill *Bengal in 1756-57,* vol. I, p. clxiii fn.

CHAPTER TEN

Treason and Treachery : The 'Battle' of Plassey

THUS FAR, in psychological handling of the situation, Clive displays extraordinary cleverness, and the Nawab utter lack of prudence, which can only be attenuated by the possibility that he possessed knowledge of disloyalty among leading officers of his court and other influential men. From a study of the letters which passed between the two, after the French defeat at Chandra Nagar, emerges the impression that the Nawab was constantly betraying fear of the English. He earnestly takes up a right cause, but eventually gives in to Clive, encouraging the latter's belief that he (the Nawab) could be coerced. Here, Clive is at his best as a strategist and psychologist. He begins his post-Chandra Nagar correspondence with humble offerings of his submission to the Nawab, and then, dropping broad hints of superiority of the English forces, holds out threats on the basis of this profession of superiority. The Nawab was in earnest when he made the protection of the French his concern and conveyed his anger to the English against their threats, but when all was over and the French were humbled, what remained was the impression that he was a bully. This was a rich experience Clive gathered, and made himself wiser with it. His immediate object now was to uproot the French completely from Bengal, and to its achievement, he directed all his cajolement and threats.

On the day of the French surrender, Clive, apprising the Nawab of this object, wrote to him: 'My heart's earnest in your interest, and shall always be ready with my own life and that of my whole army to drive away your enemies. I hope that by your Excellency's favour all our enemies in your country will fall into our hands.'[1] In the letter he sent to the Nawab the next day (24 March), he said: 'I have given the severest orders to all my people not to molest any of your subjects, nor shall any of them dare to frown

[1] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.,* (Col. Clive's Correspondence, No. 85).

on them. Should any of your Rajahs or great Jemidars refuse to pay the revenues, I am ready at your desire to send any force you please to subdue them.'[2] And the Nawab congratulates Clive on the victory of English arms, suppressing his earlier feeling that he was opposed to the Anglo-French clash, and ignoring the human element that a congratulatory letter will be construed as his weakness. He says:

> The particulars of your victory at Francedangy which I had long been impatient to hear gave me inexpressible pleasure. I thank God that your enemies so easily fell into your hands, and that their great place is fallen into your hands. You have now no longer any uneasiness on this account. It has pleas'd God to make you and all your friends happy in this great victory.[3]

Not only this. Earlier, on the day on which fighting ceased (23 March), he conveyed an offer of help to Clive: 'I am told that the French forces are coming from the ports of Dekan to fight you, I therefore write you this that if you should have any occasion for the assistance of my forces that you write me speedily; that they may be with you in time.'[4] The same man who, only a few days before, threatened to march with an army to protect his subjects and severely protested against the British invasion of Chandra Nagar, and, after the British victory, offers assistance to the victor and not to the vanquished! To a clever person like Clive, this was enough indication to know that the Nawab's mind changed according to expediency.

Clive's reaction to the Nawab's congratulatory letter was to advance his ultimate aim of annihilating the French, and he wrote to the Nawab (29 March) that 'it was almost impossible that there can be lasting peace in your kingdom while there are two such powerful nations in it'. Therefore he demanded of the Nawab 'to deliver up' to the English 'the persons and effects of the French at Cossimbazar, and their other out-settlements'.[5] The next day, he emphasised the same demand thus (letter dated 30 March):

> There wants nothing now to fix the peace of your kingdom, but that you should deliver up to us the French with their effects, wherever they are to be found in your dominions. For remember my words Sir,—let them take deep root in your mind

[2] *Ibid.*, (No. 87). [3] *Ibid.*, (No. 90). [4] *Ibid.*, (No. 88).
[5] *Ibid.*, (No. 93).

—that whenever there are two such powerful nations, the peace of your country cannot be lasting. Cast your eyes on the Dekan and Carnetick country, and see what thousands of the Mogul's subjects, what sums of money, what populous and magnificent cities have been lost by their taking opposite parts in the wars there.

Your Excellency has now an opportunity of preventing the same unhappy scene ever passing in this country by entirely driving them out of it, and it will be always in our power to keep them so. What matters it whether the revenues of your country proceed from the trade of one or two nations, so that the amount be but the same.[6]

The Nawab's sense of justice and fairplay did not readily accept Clive's demands, and on 4 April, he wrote back to Clive:

> I address you seeing you are a man of wisdom and knowledge, and well acquainted with the customs and trade of the world, and you must know that the French, by the permission and phirmaund of the King, have built their several factories and carried on their trade in this kingdom. I cannot therefore, without hurting my character and exposing myself to trouble hereafter, deliver up their goods and factories unless I have a written order from them for so doing, and I'm persuaded that from your friendship for me you w'd never be glad at anything where my fame would suffer, as I, on my own part, am ever desirous of promoting your good.

The Nawab suggested the following course to Clive:

> Mr. Renault, the French Governor, being in your power [prison], if you could get from him a paper under his own hand and seal to this purpose, that of his own will and pleasure he thereby gave up to the English Company's servants and empowered them to receive all the factories, money, and goods belonging to the French Company without any hindrance from the Nabob's people and would send this to me, I should be secure by that from any trouble hereafter on that account. But it is absolutely necessary you come to some agreement about the King's duties arising on the French trade, for this reason that there may be no loss to the King.[7]

[6] *Ibid.*, (No. 99). [7] *Ibid.*, (No. 111)

As ruler of Bengal, it was the Nawab's duty to afford protection to the French; and the demand Clive was making was extraordinary. But Clive, in his reply to the Nawab (8 April) took his stand on the convention the Anglo-French fighting on the Coromandal Coast had established: 'In any of the provinces when any place belonging to the French has been taken by the English, or if the French possessed themselves of any place of ours, the Governor of that province never offered to detain the subordinate factories or goods belonging to either, nor ever required a written order for their delivery.' This 'convention' grew from the breakdown of the authority of the Indian chiefs in the south and emergence of the English or the French superiority, and could not be dictated to the ruler of Bengal who still reigned and had not become a puppet of a foreign company. But the English occupation of Chandra Nagar was an accomplished fact now, and the Nawab having failed to do his duty by the French, and also having acquiesced in and hailed that accomplishment, Clive was right in arguing (as he did in his letter dated 8 April) that all other French factories were subordinate to Chandra Nagar, and must, therefore, be delivered to the English. He added further plausibility to this argument (in another letter of his dated 10 April) by suggesting 'how contrary it is to the custom of a European nation to force Mr. Ranault to do what is disagreeable or hurtful to his Company and their affairs'. (Renault was in Clive's custody then.) He also promised to make good the loss that might be occasioned to the revenues by the extinction of the French trade.

For a while, the Nawab showed firmness of his sense of duty towards the French and told Law, (to quote the latter) 'to fear nothing', and 'that he would support' the French 'with all his forces'.[8] Emboldened by this assurance, the French improved the defences of their Kasimbazar factory. Says Law, chief of that factory: 'I laboured for some days to construct two earthworks to put us in safety against a surprise.... The Nawab sent me a *jamadar* with a hundred musketeers to guard the Factory and one of his flags to put over the gates as I had asked him to do.' But later, Law goes on to say, 'at the solicitation of my enemies, the Nawab sent people to pull down the earthworks I had erected'. Law stopped the men from carrying out the Nawab's order, and sought clarification from the Nawab who replied 'that it was absolutely necessary to pull down these earthworks, that under present circumstances he had to do many things against his wishes, that

[8] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 201.

in refusing to obey', the French 'should draw the English upon him as well as upon themselves'. Such was the terror of the English in the Nawab's heart; and on 7 April (before Clive had written to him the two letters cited above, dated 8 and 10 April), he served a notice on Law to quit Bengal. Says Law: 'I was never more surprised in my life than when, instead of seeing any result from the fine promises of the Nawab, I received his orders to leave the country quickly unless I preferred to surrender to the English.'[9]

The Nawab issued this reprehensible order only to placate Clive, but it left the latter still aggrieved. Clive wanted Law and his other compatriots to be delivered to him, and the mercy that the Nawab showed Law became another cause of grievance. And he wrote to the Nawab (20 April):

> I had the honour of your favour of the 14th, wherein you tell me that for my satisfaction and in observance that your enemies were mine and mine yours, you had ordered Mr. Law and his attendants to quit your country and had wrote expresely to all your Naibs and Phousdars never to suffer them, whom you had turned out, to settle in any place in your Subahship, and that should the French ever enter this kingdom with a small or large force with an intention to fight me, you took God to witness, upon my writing to you, you would with your army come to my assistance.... I am attached with my heart and soul to your kindness knowing well that your enemies are mine and mine yours. But yet your Highness not delivering up Mr. Law and his people to me, and suffering them to go away is not very kind. Although I hold Mr. Law in very little consideration, yet nevertheless it could never be for your good to set my enemies, however inconsiderable, at liberty, for be assured that should either the Mahratas [Marathas] or Pattans [Pathans], as they are now meditating or any other enemies invade your country, they will certainly join them against you. I must therefore request your Excellency will allow me to send a part of my forces after them to take them prisoners, or else that your Excellency will do it yourself.[10]

Every communication from Clive that mentioned of his desire to send troops to Murshidabad terrified the Nawab, and he rushed

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 202. [10] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Col. Clive's Correspondence. No. 121).

his reply saying that there was no need. The first of such communications was sent on 24 March; in it Clive wrote to the Nawab:

> You will not be displeas'd at the march of 600 sepoys whom I have sent to overtake 100 French soldiers that have made their escape.... As they (the French) are never ceasing their endeavours to deprive me of the honour of your friendship, I am therefore determin'd to send Dilhur Jung[11] (Watson) to you in a day or two accompanied by another Englishman.[12]

To this letter, the Nawab replied:

> I make no doubt the sepoys that went in pursuit of the French soldiers are now returned. It is not convenient that Dilhur Jung should come here at present.... The Rajahs and Zemindars of Bengal have not such power that I need write to you to punish them. I shall apply to you when I have great wars.[13]

The terror excited the Nawab to write the same thing again on 28 March: 'I make no doubt but you will agreable to my letters put a stop to Dilhur Jung's coming. It were better that you should put a stop to the sending or coming yourself, and return to Calcutta, when 'tis proper I'll call you myself.'[14] On the very next day (28 March), the Nawab reiterated his request:

> God and His Prophet are witnesses to the agreement between us, and I shall firmly abide by it. Your troubles with the French are over. Why are you come on the Hughley side I cannot find out. It is necessary that you should regard the Treaty between us, and return to Calcutta; then the inhabitants of Hughley will return to their houses without fear.[15]

Consistently with this attitude of mind, the Nawab hastened to write back to Clive, in reply to the latter's wish to send troops to capture and make Law and other Frenchmen prisoners: 'For your satisfaction, I have turned the French out of Muxadabad, and wrote an order to Rajaram Narain Bahador, my Naib at Patna, to turn them out of his bounds. If after this your troops should

[11] Diller Jang (The Courageous in Battle)—Indian title given to Waston.
[12] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.,* (Col. Clive's Correspondence, No. 87).
[13] *Ibid.,* (No. 95). [14] *Ibid.,* (No. 100). [15] *Ibid.,* (No. 10).

come to fight them the peace and articles we have agreed to will no longer subsist.'[16]

Every leading Englishman believed that the Nawab was terror-stricken. Watts, the English envoy at Murshidabad (writing to Walsh on 14 April), says: 'Fear is the only means to prevail with him.'[17] Clive, of course, knew it too well. He says (in his letter dated 16 April to William Mabbot): 'As the Nabob is a very weak prince and entirely actuated by fear, a respectable force in these parts will always make him cautious how he undertakes anything against us.'[18] Watson had had this opinion ever since the Nawab made an abject surrender in February.

The English had now two objects before them: (1) to secure expeditious fulfilment of the terms of the 9 February treaty; and (2) to complete the annihilation of the French so that they and the Nawab, joining together, might not, in the future, constitute a threat to the English. The demoralisation of the French and the Nawab, that of the latter being more thorough, had facilitated the task of the English. Watts was engaged at the Nawab's Court in buying the leading men and winning over the merchants and the bankers. Of his doings at the court, Watts sent the following account to Clive on 11 April:

> As the Nabob credits and is guided by five or six of these low people, these idle stories that they report to our prejudice he believes, therefore to have our contract soon fulfilled and get his confidence, Omichund and I after many conferences are of opinion it is adviseable to be at some expence to gain over these people, which we think will be attended with many advantages, in getting Nuncomaur phousdar of Hughly, when by his representations we hope to get instead of the 38 villages, many of which lie at a distance from Calcutta, a much larger extent of country contiguous to Calcutta. . . . I chose to have your opinion first. If it coincides with ours I shall then address them. Be assured I shall be as frugal as possible in this expence. When we have once gained over these people to our interest I hope all affairs will be soon settled. As Omichund has a superior understanding and as I am persuaded it is greatly for his interest that we should be successful, I therefore consult him on all occasions, which I hope you will approve of.[19]

[16] *Ibid.*, (No. 122). [17] Hill, vol. II, p. 330. [18] *Ibid.*, p. 337.
[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 322-3.

On 12 April, Scrafton (who was then at Kasimbazar) sent word to Clive that 'Monickchund is restored to favour at the expence of 10½ *laacks*'.[20] On 18 April, Scrafton passed on the following information and suggestion to Walsh:

> Omichund has been very ill within these two or three days. I went to see him last night and sat about one hour with him. He told me the present posture of our affairs is thus, the Nabob thinks we shall never forgive the injuries he has done, and that it is impossible we should be sincere; fear will make him keep firm to his pretended friendship; ... that whenever the French have a force he will certainly join them, that nothing but the entrance of the Afghans can keep him firm to us. He pretends they are actually in the way; that the people of Benares are running to Patna and the people of Patna are getting boats ready to run down here; that if this proves true he does not doubt but the Nabob will place intire confidence in us and even trust all his treasures to us. Should not this happen and the Nabob should in any respect deviate from his treaty we should break with him and set up another Nabob; that Luttee is a proper man, of a very good character and supported by Juggutseat, and would join us with two thousand good horse, Monickchund with what he could; that all the great man wish him dead. Omichund has a very good scheme to procure us a full equivalent for the thirty-eight villages, which is instead of them to procure us by the means of Monickcuhnd and Nundkomar a very considerable extent of our Bounds. Colonel's and Major's losses will be fully paid when desired. 15 days will decide and there will be time enough before the Rains set in; for by that time we shall have more certain news of the Afghans. Omichund's behaviour to us deserves the utmost commendation. I never saw his equal for attention and attendance on business.[21]

(In this letter, Scrafton refers to 'cyphers' through which he sent some secret message; what he said therein is not available.)

That Siraj-ud-daula should be done away with and replaced by another Nawab had been decided upon at Calcutta, according to Renault. He says:

> The whole *Durbar* was bought over, and the leading *jamadars*

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 326. [21] *Ibid.*, pp. 342-3.

engaged not to allow their soldiers to fight. The Seths were admitted to the conspiracy. Mir Jafar, one of the chief *jamadars*, was chosen to replace Siraj-ud-daula and to become Nawab, and promised for his part to fulfil the conditions of the treaty made in February, and in consequence to pay three hundred *lakhs*, partly to recoup the Company and the English for their losses and expenses, and partly as a gratuity to the army and navy. He promised besides, and in full sovereignty, five hundred *toises* of land outside the ancient limits of Calcutta, and subject to certain rents, all the villages (*aldees*) from

> Calcutta to Culpee.... Never was a conspiracy conducted so publicly and with equal indiscretion on the part of the English and the Moors. Nothing else was talked about in all their Settlements, and what will surprise you is that, whilst every place echoed with the noise of it, the Nawab, who had a number of spies, was ignorant of everything.[22]

The Nawab had had no peace of mind since the 9 February treaty was concluded; yet he was gradually giving effect to its terms. Watts, whose job it was to have the treaty given effect to, says in his letter to Clive (11 April): 'The Nabob is very dilatory in complying with refunding the ready money part of his contract.' But in the same letter Watts expresses satisfaction about the compliance of the terms, and deprecates the intention of Clive and Watson to send troops aganst the Nawab. He argues thus:

> It is hinted to me as if it would be proposed to the Committee for our army to march this way, but hope no such proposal will be listened to, as it will be violating our treaty with the Nabob, who is complying with his part of it, though not so expeditiously as we could wish; it will be throwing the country again into confusion, and probably prevent the Company's getting an investment for another year, the consequences of which may be fatal to them; nothing but an open and an apparent breach by the Nabob in his contract ought to induce us to rekindle the war in this Province.[23]

Nevertheless, on 19 April, Watson despatched a very stiff note to the Nawab, which gave a foretaste of the things to come:

> I am honoured with your letter of the 14th of this months,

[22] Hill, vol. III, pp. 250-1. [23] Hill, vol. II, p. 323.

acquainting me with your having received at several times the letters[24] I lately wrote you. Your forbearance, and not writing to me, hath not the appearance of that friendship you would persuade me you have for my countrymen; and with regard to myself, I must take the liberty to say I was more particularly entitled to a speedy answer to my letters from my high rank and station; and I cannot help looking upon your neglect in this respect, but as a slight offered to the King my master, who sent me into India to protect his subjects, and demand justice wheresoever they were oppressed. ... My brother Mr. Watts who is entrusted with all the Company's concerns always writes me the particulars of your intended favours towards us: but I have never found that what he writes is put in execution, neither do I find that what you wrote me in your letter dated the 1st of Rajub (22nd of March) is yet complied with. You therein assured me, that you would fulfill all the Articles you had agreed to by the 15th of that Moon. Have you ever yet complied with them all? No. How then can I place any confidence in what you write, when your actions are not correspondent with your promises? Or how can I reconcile your telling me, in so sacred a manner, you will be my ally, and assist me with your forces against the French? when you have given a *perwannah* to Mr. Law and his people to go towards Patna in order to escape me, and tell me it is for my satisfaction, and in observance of the mutual Agreement, you have taken this measure. Is this an act of friendship? Or is it in this manner I am to understand you will assist me? ... Why then do you endeavour to persuade me you will be my friend, when at the same time you give my enemies your protection, furnish them with ammunition, and suffer them to go out of your dominions with three pieces of cannon?

I have already told you, and now repeat it again, that while a Frenchman remains in this kingdom I will never cease pursuing him; but if they will deliver themselves up, they shall find me merciful, and I am confident those who have already fallen into my hands will do me the justice to say, they have been treated with a much greater generosity than is usual by the general custom of war.

If you will reflect upon the oath you have taken, you cannot

[24] These letters (if written at all) are not available, nor the one of the prompt in replying, but also submissive Nawab. Clive's correspondence shows that the Nawab was not only.

but join with me in what follows: As soon as Cossimbuzar is properly garrisoned, to which place our troops will speedily begin their march, I desire you will grant a *dustuck* for the passage of two thousand of our soldiers by land to Patna. You may be assured they will do no violence, nor commit the least injury to the natives: the only design of sending them is to seize the French, and restore tranquility and perfect peace in your Kingdom, which can never be truly established in these dominions, while a war continues between us and them.[25]

This is the wording a spokesman of a trading company employs in his address to a ruler and threatens him in the name of the king of England, as if it is that king whose right it is to enforce the will of the Company in India and the *farman* of the Emperor of Delhi! It was not the authority of the King of England that imparted courage to Watson, but of the intrigues and the effect of bribery which had isolated the Nawab from the commanders of his army. Watson arrogated to himself the power of a dictator and felt confident that he could dictate to the Nawab as to a subordinate. Watson even indulges in fabrication when he says that the Nawab supplied ammunition to the French, for Watts or any other informant never said anything of this kind in their communications. In the same note Watson demanded complete implementation, without further loss of time, of all the Articles of the treaty. But the Nawab's headache was not this but that he should permit free movement of the English troops ostensibly in pursuit of the French and also help them (the English) in this objective. Both Clive and Watson insisted that this demand was a part of the treaty, which again was a mischievous lie. Nowhere in the treaty was it provided that the enemies of the English would be enemies of the Nawab, and vice versa. Rightly did Watts point out to Clive (in his letter dated 26 April):

> Our attacking the French I take it has nothing to do with our Articles of Peace, neither is he (the Nawab) bound thereby to deliver them up. He writes to you that your enemies are his and his yours, but this is only a private letter and not mentioned in the Agreement, on the contrary it says we shall not war in Bengall while he continues firm to his Agreement.[26]

Yet Clive and Watson asked the Nawab to destroy the French,

[25] Hill, vol. II, pp. 344-5. [26] *Ibid.*, p. 349.

who enjoyed a legal right to trade in Bengal, and were, for all practical purposes, entitled to get protection from the Government of Bengal. But the assurance the English had received from the Nawab's own men to betray him made them (the English) feel virtual masters of the province, and they were making the treaty an excuse of furthering their aims.

Some rumours and some whispers were adding to the English apprehension of the probability of a Nawab-French combination against them. In his letter dated 14 April, Watts said: 'The Nabob before our success against Chandernagore threatened in the presence of Runjeet Roy and others to impale or cut off my head, and yesterday repeated those threats in the presence of Juggutseat, Monickchund, Coja Wazeed, Meer Abdul Caussim, and Omichund.' On 20 April, Scrafton, in his letter to Walsh, compalined:

> When our *vacqueel* went to him (the Nawab), the instant he saw him be ordered him to be turned out of the Durbar; as the fellow was going he overheard him say, "I will destroy them and their nation." Meer Jaffer was ordered to march and he would follow himself; when asked the reason he said "they are always writing me to deliver up the French; I will receive no more of their letters.... But for God's sake let us pacify him for the present; things are not ripe. Omichund is gone to Jaggutseat. I know the intent of his sending for him beforehand; it is to communicate to him his desire that we should set up Lattery. I do think I am actuated by a sincere public spirit. Give me but power and I dare swear that in ten days I could settle that you shall be joined by a large force as soon as you have marched two days north."

Scrafton then suggested the terms he would like the proposed new Nawab to accede:

> I hope the Colonel will pardon my impertinence if I offer to present what I think would be the terms we should make: Ample restitution to the Company for all their losses and ten *laack* for the charges of the war; the country south as far as Culpee on condition we keep up a body of a thousand men or more to be employed in his service; ten *coss* of land on the province of Chittagong whereon to settle a factory; the French never to resettle; restitution to all English, the Seats and Omichund; the

guilty in the affair of the Black Hole to be given up to us, &c., &c.[27]

Even before Watson's challenging note had reached the Nawab, he, in his vacillating mood, thought of proceeding against the English, but gave up the thought on further reflection. A new threat, of which Scrafton gives the following account in his letter, added to his worries: 'The Nabob expects news every hour of a battle between the Nabob of Patna and a revolted Rajah, the Maiu Raja.' The 'Pathans', (as Watts informed Clive on 23 April), were also on the march with 'their intentions against Bengal'.[28] Writing on the Nawab's vicillating mood, Scrafton says (in his letter dated 21 April to Walsh): 'The (Nawab's) army is daily increasing. In the fit he was in two days ago he ordered Meer Jaffeir to march, and promised him six *lack* the instant he advanced beyond their present encampment, and to make it ten if he was victorious; the next day he starts at the danger, countermands the march, sends for the (English) vacqueel and gives him *beetle*.' Then, Scrafton goes on to say, the Nawab 'sent for' Omi Chand 'at night', and asked him: 'What shall I do to satisfy the English? let me know their demands and I will comply with it; for I want to march to the northward.' Watson's note and this threat from the north completed the imbalance of the Nawab's mind. There is to be found the same fickleness in his dealings with the French; we get a glimpse of it from Law. Law, who was then on his way to Patna, having been exiled by the Nawab, says:

> When I halted anywhere he (the Nawab) sent to ask me why I did not go on, and when I was on the march, was always writing that I went too fast. To satisfy him we should have been always in motion and yet not advancing; this did not suit us.... The 2nd May as I was passing Bhagulpur I received an order from the Nawab to stop and wait for a *parwana* in which his wishes were explained. In fact the next day the chief of the *chotabardars*, accompanied by about one hundred mounted scouts, handed me this *parwana*. The Nawab ordered me to return at once to Murshidabad to join him and attack the English.... The 6th May, very early in the morning, I received a second *parwana* which ordered me not to come to Murshidabad, but to remain at Rajmehal where there was a Fort and troops.[29]

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 349-50. [28] *Ibid.*, p. 353. [29] Hill, vol. III, p. 207.

The Nawab's anticipated involvement with the 'Pathan' invaders would, Watts thought, be the best opportunity for the English to proceed against him, and he advised Clive (23 April) accordingly: 'If the Nabob or the greater part of his forces should be obliged to march to the northward to resist the Pytans [Pathans], you will then be able to take the city and the Nabob's treasure with great ease.'[30] In the same letter Watts said:

> Since writing the above Omichund has by my desire had a meeting with Meir Godau Yar Cawn Laitty [Khauda Yar Khan Latty], who has engaged that whenever the Nabob breaks with us he will join us as soon as possible with his whole force on condition of our making him Nabob; in recompense for which he will grant the Company a large extent of country near Calcutta, and a sum of ready money sufficient to satisfy the navy, military, and all the inhabitants of Calcutta. ... He requests that you will write a soothing letter to the Nabob, which may entirely allay the apprehensions he has of us and induce him to march northward, which he will the moment his fears of us cease. Omichund and Godau Yar Cawn Laitty both assure me the Nabob will break his agreement with us, that he has entertained the French in his service, and that they will not go beyond Patna. All that we have to do is to lull him into security, and by that means induce him to march northward.[31]

Three days later (26 April) Watts cancelled the instruction he had suggested in the above-quoted letter, saying that the Pathans were not coming now 'and that the Nabob will not leave the city, which makes the pacifying letter I desired you to write now unnecessary'.[32] The Nawab himself passed on this information to Clive: 'By the favour of God peace has been agreed upon betwixt Achmud Shah Abdally and me. By repeated advices I am informed of his returning by continued marches from Delhi to his own country, and that he had got as far as Paniput and Suniput.'[33]

In the same letter the Nawab informed Clive of his having fulfilled all the obligations the treaty imposed on him. He said:

> The Articles of Agreement with the Company are all complied

[30] Hill, vol. II, p. 353. [31] *Ibid.*, pp. 353-4. [32] *Ibid.*, p. 363.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 360.

with. Whatever money and goods belonging to the Company that were taken by me at Cossimbazar and Dacca, have been delivered back to Mr. Watts. The several *perwannahs* for the currency of the Company's business, which are wrote agreeable to Mr. Watts's desire, together with that for erecting a Mint in Calcutta Alinagur have been also put into his hands, of which you have no doubt been informed by his letter. I wrote you before in regard to the cannon and shall act to this conformable to your answer. Though in the Articles nothing is mentioned relative to the Calcutta affairs, for your satisfaction however I have got from Monickchund the Calcutta accounts.[34]

In regard to the French affair, the Nawab said:

> As to what you have wrote regarding Mr. Law, that it was very improper to set him at liberty, and that they would join with my enemies against me, therefore your forces would follow them, and you desired they might meet with no opposition from me, it is not the custom of Hindostan to bind or deliver up to their enemies the weak, and those who have begged their protection I have turned Mr. Law out of my dominions.... You can neither expect nor will you gain any advantage by sending troops, except that of distressing the Kingdom, and the consequence, if you take this step, will be the breaking the treaty.[35]

What the Nawab says about the treaty is affirmed by Watts: 'He is complying with his contract, grants us *perwannahs* and whatever we ask within the compass of his Agreement.'[36] (It was in this very letter—dated 26 April to Clive—that Watts had pointed out that 'our attacking the French has nothing to do with our Articles of Peace'.) Thus there remained no cause of grievance against the Nawab. Yet Watts now pleaded for violation of the treaty. His argument was:

> But when we consider there is no dependance on the Nabob, that he is secretly our enemy, and that we have almost positive assurances of the French being in his way (pay?), and have great reason to believe he will join them on the first occasion, which junction must be fatal to our affairs here, prudence certainly requires us to guard against such an accident.[37]

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 359. [35] *Ibid.*, pp. 359-60. [36] *Ibid.*, pp. 362-3.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 363.

The Nawab's own men, for the benefits they hoped to get out of a change, confirmed Watts' fears. Writing of what they told Watts, he says:

> Juggutseat, Runget Roy, Omichund and others, in short all degrees of persons, are persuaded he (the Nawab) will break his Agreement and attack us whenever he is disengaged or our forces are weakened by your leaving us and the departure of the men-of-war, or whenever he can be assisted by the French. ... Meir Jaffeir two days ago sent for Petrus privately and told him the Nabob was generally disliked, that he ill used and affronted every body, that for his part whenever he went to visit him he expected assassination, therefore allways had his son and forces in readiness, that he was persuaded the Nabob would not keep to his Agreement, and says he only waits till Munloll [Mohan Lal][38] is well and for some forces that are expected from Patna in eight or nine days, to attack us. Meir Jaffiir therefore sent for Petrus and desired him to tell me that if you are content he, Raheem Cawn, Roydoolub, and Bahadur Ally Cawn and others, are ready and willing to join their forces, seize the Nabob and set up another person that may be approved of.[39]

And Watts gave Clive the following advice:

> It would appear that if we propose coming to a rupture, our business is at present to amuse, lay aside all appearance of war while we concert of measures with the principal *jumidars*, and that before we show our intentions of any act of hostility or motion of the forces northward, a necessary step to be taken is the withdrawing the Company's goods and people from all the Subordinates, as you must be sensible the neglect of that will throw them entirely at the Nabob's mercy.... I request you will answer my letters in cypher.[40]

A few days later, Watts shifted his choice of the future Nawab to Mir Jafar, and sent to Clive (28 April) the following intelligence and advice:

> The three fourths of the (Nawab's) army are his enemies.

[38] 'It was said that Mohan Lal was poisoned by his enemies so as to deprive the Nawab of his advice.'—Hill.
[39] Hill, vol. II, pp. 362-3. [40] *Ibid.*, pp. 363-4.

When the agreement with Meir Jaffeir is settled we cannot have a man more powerful. There is none equal to him. One day will determine everything, and we shall not have more to do, but it is our business to follow his advice. What I write I beg you will keep an inviolable secret and talk of nothing else but merchandize, ... I request you will order your army to Calcutta and keep only a garrison in Chandernagore, and appear to give over all thoughts of war, and send your people no where but keep all quiet.[41]

On 1 May, the Fort William Select Committee approved the plan to raise a 'revolution' in Bengal to replace Siraj-ud-daula, believing that he would not stick to the terms of the treaty and that his 'word, honour, and friendship' could not be depended upon. The committee also believed that Siraj-ud-daula would not implement the remainder of the terms, and that 'upon the first favourable opportunity he will throw off the mask under which he at present conceals an implacable resentment and determined resolution to ruin the English and extirpate them his country'. The committee's last reason to approve the plan was: 'The Nabob is so universally hated by all sorts and degrees of men; the affection of the army is so much alienated from him by his ill usage of the officers, and a revolution so generally wished for, that it is probable the step will be attempted (and successfully too) whether we give our assistance or not.'[42]

On the next day (2 May), Clive sent a letter to the Nawab 'amusing' him according to Watts' instruction, and another to Watts, discussing the future plan. To the Nawab he wrote: 'Your Highness may have no longer any suspicion or doubt of the truth of what I have often declared to you, that I desire nothing so much as to live in peace and friendship with you and to make your kingdom flourish.'[43] And to Watts he wrote:

> I have wrote the Nabob a soothing letter, this accompanies another of the same kind to Moon Lol agreeable to your desire.... Everything is settled.... Tell Meer Jaffier to fear nothing, that I will join him with 5,000 men who never turned their backs; assure him that I will march night and day to his assistance, and stand by him as long as I have a man left.[44]

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 367. [42] *Ibid.*, p. 371. [43] *Ibid.*, p. 372.
[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 372-3.

Clive also returned, as advised by Watts, most of his troops to Calcutta, so that, on this demonstration of 'good intentoins' the Nawab might be persuaded to withdraw his troops, stationed at Plassey, to Murshidabad. Clive, indeed, made this suggestion to the Nawab in his letter. Clive's design, in this suggestion, was to make his way clear up to Murshidabad, the capital of Bengal. As for the movement of his own troops from Calcutta, he manufactured a plausible excuse of which he apprised Watts in his letter dated 11 May: 'Acquaint Meer Jaffier . . . that a report will be put about that Bussy is entering the country, to cover our real designs . . . tell Meer Jaffier &c. the truth.'[45] But the Nawab did not withdraw his troops to Murshidabad, and Clive again protested to him: 'I shall look upon it as a declaration that you do not chuse the English for your friends; the more so that after the most solemn promise of withdrawing your army as soon as I ordered mine into quarters, yours still continues in the field to the great detriment of trade and ruin of your country.'[46]

The defeat of the Nawab in the impending action being certain, his army officers having been won over, a draft of the treaty to be concluded with the new Nawab, Mir Jafar, was prepared. Just at this time, avarice of Omi Chand, caused some offence to the English, but they did not allow it to burst out. When the draft treaty was shown by Watts to Omi Chand the latter, finding no mention of any reward for his services, 'insisted' on Watts 'demanding for him 5 per cent. on all the Nabob's treasure', which, says Watts (in his letter dated 14 May, to Clive) 'would amount to two *crore* of rupees'. He also demanded a quarter of the Nawab's other wealth. Omi Chand also 'proposed giving' to Rai Durlabh Ram, 'to secure' him 'to his interest', 'a quarter part of whatever they (the English) could dupe Meir Jaffeir out of it'. Concluding his opinion about Omi Chand, Watts says: 'These and many other Articles, in which his own ambition, cunning, and avaricious views were the chief motives, he positively insisted on and would not be prevailed upon to recede from one Article.'[47]

At this critical time, negotiations with Omi Chand for a reduction in his demand were considered impolitic, and the Select Committee devised, at the meeting held on 17 May, the following scheme to dupe him:

> We think it will be necessary to form a double Treaty, both to be signed by Meer Jaffeir and by us; in one of which the

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 379. [46] *Ibid.*, p. 380. [47] *Ibid.*, p. 381.

Article in favour of Omichund is to be inserted, in the other to be left out, and Meer Jaffeir is to be informed of that which we design to abide by and esteem authentick with our reasons for taking such a step.[48]

On 3 June, an agreement was secretly concluded between the English and Mir Jafar. Mir Jafar had (says Watts in his letter dated 16 May, to Clive) 'sent a blank paper with his seal upon it in order to have the Articles wrote upon it'.[49] The following were the terms of the agreement 'accepted, signed, and sworn to by Mir Jafar':

First. That he will confirm all the grants and privileges ceded to the English by the Nabob Serajah Dowlat.
Second. That he will enter into an alliance with the English offensive and defensive against all enemies whatever, either country powers or Europeans.
Third. Whatever Frenchmen are in the Provinces of Bengal, Bahar and Orixa, to be delivered up to the English with all their goods, Factories and effects, and that they never be permitted to settle again in any of the said Provinces.
Fourth. In consideration of the heavy losses the English Company sustained by the destruction of Calcutta by Serajah Dowlat, and also on account of the expences of the war they shall receive the sum of (one hundred *lack* of *sicca* rupees).[50]
Fifth. For the losses sustained by the Europeans by the taking of Calcutta, they shall receive the sum of fifty *lack* of *sicca* rupees.
Sixth. The *Gentoos* shall receive on the same account the sum of twenty *lack* of *sicca* rupees.
Seventh. The Armenians shall receive on the same account the sum of seven *lack* of *sicca* rupees.
And such sum as are paid on account of this and the two proceeding Articles shall be distributed by the two Admirals, and the gentlemen composing the Select Committee, as shall appear to them or the major part of them just and equitable, without their being liable to any appeal from them or their authority disputed.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 383. [49] *Ibid.*, p. 382.
[50] 'This was left blank, to be filled in by Mir Jafar himself' (Clive's letter dated 19 May).

EIGHT. That Omychund shall receive the sum of twenty lack of sicca rupees.[51]

NINTH. Whatever ground there is within the Calcutta Ditch belonging to the *jemidars* to be given to the English and 600 yards without the said Ditch all round.

TENTH. That the country to the south of Calcutta, lying between the river and the lake and reaching as far as Culpee, shall be put under the perpetual government of the English in the manner as now governed by the country *jemidars*, the English paying the usual rents for the same to the Treasury.

ELEVENTH. Whenever the Nabob requires the assistance of our army, the extraordinary expences to be paid by him.

TWELFTH. The Moors shall not fortifie the river below Hughley.

THIRTEENTH. That these Articles be complied with within thirty days from the day Jaffier Ally Cawn Bahadur shall be acknowledged Nabob at Moorshedabad or anywhere within the Provinces of Bengal, Bahar and Orixa.

FOURTEENTH. On condition Jaffier Ally Cawn Bahadar solemnly ratifies and swears to fulfil the Above Articles, we the underwritten do for and in the behalf of the Honourable East India Company declare, on the Holy Evangelists and before God, that we will assist Jaffier Ally Cawn Bahadur with our whole force to obtain the Subaship of the Provinces of Bengal, Bahar and Orixa, and further that we will assist him to the utmost against all his enemies whatever, whenever he calls upon us for that purpose, provided when he becomes the Nabob, he fulfils the above Articles.[52]

On behalf of the Company, the agreement was signed by Charles Watson, Roger Drake, Robert Clive, William Watts, James Killpatrick, and Richard Becher.

Watson did not agree to the fictitious Agreement and refused to put his signature on it. Clive, therefore, got Watson's signature forged. He says in his letter dated 18 May, to the Select Committee:

Enclosed you will receive the real and fictitious articles of Agreement, which you will please to sign; the Admiral promised me to do the same by the real one, but not the fictitious one; if he makes any scruple send it without and we will sign it for him in such manner that Omichund shall not discover it.[53]

[51] Omitted in the real treaty.
[52] *Ibid.*, Hill, vol. II, pp. 383-5.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 387.

This question was raised before a parliamentary committee, (in 1772), appointed to 'enquire into the Nature, State, and Condition of the East India Company, of the British Affairs in the East India', and it was stated by Captain Brereton, Lieutenant with Admiral Watson in the Kent in the year 1757, in his evidence, 'that he had often heard the Admiral'—Watson was already dead —'speak of it' (the fictitious Agreement); 'that it was proposed to him to sign a fictitious treaty to deceive Omichund of thirty *lack*, which he refused to do as dishonourable to him as an officer and an affront to propose it to him; that it was then proposed somebody should sign it for him which he also refused and said he would wash his hands of it, he would have nothing to do with it, he was a stranger to deception, they might do as they pleased.'[54]

When machinations against the Nawab were being formulated, Clive got another excuse, which he utilised as a proof of the Nawab's 'unfriendly cliques' towards the English, and confronted him with it. The Nawab had supposedly (towards the end of April) written the following letter to Law: 'I send you ten thousand rupees for your expences. Remain quiet at Rajahmaul. When Monsieur Bussie Bahadur &c. comes on this side Cuttack, I will then send for you.'[55] The Nawab's capital, being honey-combed with English spies, Watts came to know of it almost at once, and communicated it to Clive on 3 May: 'The Nabob has sent a Bill of Exchange for 10,000 rupees to Law for the support of his troops.'[56] Khwaja Wajid, who had been friendly to the French in their period of distress, and who had now gone over to the English, also passed on to Clive two confidential letters he had received, one from Law and the other from Mirza Sallah, Governor of Orissa. As already stated, the Nawab, afraid of an English attack, had, in his vacillating mood, asked Law to return to Murshidabad; but Law, knowing of the Nawab's wavering mind, feared that the invitation might be a trap to deliver him to the English. The following is Law's letter to Khwaja Wajid:

> I have received a purwannah from the Nabob to the following effect: "That English are again meditating some treachery against me; wherever this may find you, you are to return from thence." I am arrived at Bogglepore [Bhagalpur] at a great expence wherefore I cannot move at present, but I send my Deputy Mons. Sinfray that he may write me the reason

[54] Hill, vol. III, p. 318. [55] Hill, vol. II, p. 369.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 375.

of my being called, and then I will go there. As you always show me great favour therefore I write you to desire you will let me know the cause of the rupture between the Nabob and the English, and what has the Nabob sent to me for. I hope you will oblige me in answering these particulars. Mons. Sinfray is going there.[57]

The following is the text of Mirza Sallah's letter to Wajid:

I have received a purwannah to the following effect: "That the distinguished of the Empire, the sword of riches, the victorious in war Mons. Bussy is coming to assist Mons. Rennault, the Governour of Chandernagore. That I am not to oppose the passage of Mons. Bussy's forces, that I must go out to meet him, and show him respect, and send him your way." As yet I hear nothing of his coming this way, but agreeable to the Nabob's order I have wrote to all the Jemidars and Thannadars on that side of the country, that if Mons. Bussy should march this way not to impede their coming, and to give me immediate advice of his coming that I may go to meet him, court his friendship, and send him that way.[58]

But Bussy was not coming. Watts later learnt it from Wajid himself, and passed on the information to Clive on 23 May, saying:

The Nabob has wrote to Bussi and promised him 20 *lack* of rupees in case he would come to his assistance, from whom he has lately received this answer that his business in Golconda detains him there, that he is no servant of the French Company's, and cannot come. On this the Nabob wrote to Mr. Law (whose forces are in the Nabob's pay at 10,000 rupees *per* month) directing him to stay where he is and prepare to return upon the first advices.[59]

On 13 June, Clive (in a long letter) put before the Nawab the mirror of his anti-English designs. He wrote in that letter:

When Your Excellency called me to your assistance against the Patans, I swear before God that it was my firm intention to assist you with my whole force, and that I esteemed it the

[57] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.,* (Col. Clive's Correspondence, p. 50).
[58] *Ibid.* [59] Hill, vol. II, p. 392.

greatest happiness to have such an opportunity of testifying my friendship for you, whereas Your Excellency chose your friends from among my enemies as evidently appears from this, that we have certain knowledge from Dacan of the letters you have wrote to our enemy Monsieur Bowsie. I refer you to the copies of your own letters. If you do not chuse to shew me your copies, I will wait on (you) with those I have. You often have assured me that you had sent Monsieur Law and his people out of your country over the Carumnassar [Karmanesa], whereas they are still by your orders at Bogglipore, and they receive a monthly allowance of 10,000 rupees; as an instance of which they received a bill on the Seats' house at Rajamaul for 10,000 and continue to receive the same monthly. What you have wrote to him and his answer I am well acquainted with.[60]

(Clive bluffed the Nawab by pretending that he had received all this information from the Decan. The *Faujdar* of Raj Mahal, where Law was staying, was Mir Jafar's brother, Mir Daud Khan; it was he who detained the correspondence that was exchanged between Law and the Nawab, and passed on the contents to the English.[61]

In the same letter, Clive complained that some of the money promised in the February treaty had not yet been paid—while the Nawab's complaint was that Watts was not granting receipts for the Company's effects returned to him—and gave the Nawab the following intimation:

> It is therefore the sentiments of all who have the charge of the Company's affairs that I go to Cossimbuzar, put our disputes to arbitration before Juggut Seat, Rajah Mohun Lal, Meer Jaffeir Khan, Rajah Roy Dulub, Meer Murdun and the rest of your great men, and if it shall appear that I have deviated from the treaty I bind myself to give up all my demands. But if it should appear Your Excellency has deviated from it, I shall demand satisfaction for all our losses, and all the charges of the navy and army.[62]

Clive believed that in this way the Nawab would be deceived into the belief that he and his forces were coming for negotiations and for peaceful settlement of the outstanding matters. But that

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 407. [61] Law's Memoir, Hill, vol. III, p. 210.
[62] Hill, vol. II, p. 392.

very day, 13 June, (before Clive's letter reached the Nawab), another incident provided unequivocal evidence of English intentions, put the Nawab on his guard, and urged the urgency of making preparations. On that day, Watts, pretending to the Nawab that he and his companions were going out 'to hunt on the plains' of Maidapur (the Company's country seat near Kasimbazar), and obtaining 'his leave', left Murshidabad, where they considered it unsafe to reside in view of the coming attack, to join Clive. On 6 June, Watts had communicated to Clive how Mir Jafar had planned to betray his master on the battlefield: 'Regarding the operations of war Meer Jaffeir can form no farther resolution at present than that if the Nabob took the field and Meer Jaffeir was in the van he would on your approach beat his drum, shew his colours, march off and join you to the right; if placed on either of the wings he will then endeavour to secure the Nabob; if in the rear the same, which when performed the signal will be a white flag; if the Nabob should keep the city he will then endeavour to seize him on our army's approach.'[63]

That a conspiracy had been effected between the English and the Nawab's leading men had become known to all those who cared to keep themselves posted with political affairs. George Lodewyk Vernet, Dutch chief at Kasimbazar, wrote on 16 June, to Adrian Bisdom, Director of the Dutch Settlement at Hugli: 'We have information from a reliable source that in union with the English treason is being contrived against the Nawab, and in which Festusjint's [Fateh Chand] heirs, Rajah Durlabh Ram, Mir Jafar, Khodadad Khan Latty and Boerabeek (?) are said to have a hand.[64]

At Murshidabad, Mohan Lal, the Nawab's Chief Diwan, was the only person of importance who stood loyally with him. Mir Jafar bore Mohan Lal a grudge, ever since Siraj-ud-daula's accession to the Nawabship, born of the envy that by promoting Mohan Lal to the post of the Chief Minister, the Nawab had deprived him of the right which was his. Mir Jafar could not bear with equanimity the sight of grandees and chiefs coming and saluting Mohan Lal, though they did so in obedience to the orders of the Nawab himself. Now when the projected 'revolution' was going to put him on the throne, Mir Jafar's haughtiness was infatuated, and he could not resist making demonstration of it. He 'opposed' obeisances being offered to Mohan Lal, 'which', says a Dutch account (Vernet's letter to Bisdom, dated 14 June), 'made the Nawab

[63] Hill, vol. II, p. 399. [64] *Ibid.*, p. 413.

so angry that he ordered him to be dragged from his house'.[65] But when the Nawab's men went to arrest Mir Jafar, the latter had them 'driven away' and left his place with a force. The Nawab was 'upset', and realising the inopportunity of offending Mir Jafar at a critical time, went to him to win back his 'co-operation.' And Mir Jafar, 'to hide his perfidy better', says Law, 'swears on the Koran to be faithful, and at once the Nawab is satisfied'.[66] On 19 June Mir Jafar wrote to Mirza Omar Beg (a trusted officer of his, whom he had sent to the English as a hostage for good faith) apprising him of the Nawab's repentance and overture, but firmly reiterating that he would stand by the English.[67] He also communicated this happening to Clive: 'On the news of your coming the Nabob was much intimidated, and requested at such a juncture I would stand his friend. On my part, aggreeable to the circumstances of the times, I thought it adviseable to acquiesce with his request, but what we have agreed on must be done. I have fixed the first day of the moon for my march. God willing I shall arrive.' In another letter to Clive, Mir Jafar says: the Nawab 'sent for me and flung his *turband* [turban] off before me.'[68]

On 13 June, Clive began his march with a force of 650 military, 100 *topasses*, 150 of the train (including fifty sailors), eight pieces of cannon (6-pounders), and 2,100 sepoys. On the eve of his march, he addressed a threat to Sheikh Amirulla (who, a few weeks before, had been appointed by the Nawab Faujdar of Hugli, replacing Nand Kumar):

> I am now marching to Muxadavad in order to see the Articles of the treaty complied with, which have been long delayed. Keep yourself quiet in Hugly and nobody shall molest you, but if you make the least (movement) depend on it I will send people to destroy your town. Behave as a friend to the English and you will find them such to you. Do not you interfere, but wait the event, whether our differences with the Nabob are to be settled in an amicable manner or by a battle.[69]

The same day (12 June), Amirulla hurried his answer to Clive, saying:

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 411.
[66] *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 212.
[67] *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 416.
[68] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Col. Clive's Correspondence, No. 160).
[69] Hill, vol. II, pp. 404-5.

As soon as your letter arrived I despatched it to the Nabob by express *cossids*. By the blessing of God you will soon have an answer. Delay your march till you have an answer from the Presence. I am here for the Nabob's business agreeable to his orders. The Nabob when he sent me here ordered me to do nothing to dissatisfy you. Whatever you order I am ready to obey.[70]

Answering this letter on 13 June, Clive repeated the threat: 'If you oppose the passage of our boats or supplies coming to us, or commit any other hostilities I shall destroy Hughly.'[71] Amirulla succumbed, and wrote back the same day: 'I am, conformable to the Nabob's orders, to comply with what you please to direct. I do not offer to oppose the passage of your ships or boats, nor to appear as an enemy in any respect, but am always ready to appear as a friend.'[72] The imprudent Nawab did not leave enough force at Hugli, nor at any other place up to Murshidabad, and Amirulla would have only invited destruction if he had decided to resist Clive.

On 18 June, the English forces arrived at Cutwa, which had an earthen fortification with eight round towers, and was about half a mile in circumference. 'Its importance lay in the fact that it commanded the highroad to Murshidabad, thus securing access or retreat by water, and it also contained a very large quantity of grain.' Its commander offered some resistance, but as soon as the British advanced, his troops deserted the Fort, which was occupied by them.

Clive and Mir Jafar were constantly exchanging letters, each keeping the other posted with up-to-date developments. Clive informed Mir Jafar of his having captured the Cutwa Fort, and Mir Jafar communicated to him the following information:

Sunday I marched from the city and reached Ammony Gunge and staid a day there to collect my people. The Nabob marched to-day from Tarrackpore and has pitched his tent at Moncurra near the bridge. By the blessing of God to-morrow I shall march from hence Tuesday, and shall have my quarter to the left at a distance. The Nabob's intention is to have his intrenchment at Moncurra, therefore the sooner you march to fall on him the better before his design can take place.... When you come near I shall then be able to join you. If you could send

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 405. [71] *Ibid.*, p. 407. [72] *Ibid.*, p. 407.

two or three hundred good fighting men the upper road towards Cossimbuzar, the Nabob's army would of themselves retreat. Then the battle will have no difficulty. When I am arrived near the army I will send you privately all the intelligance. Let me have previous notice of the time you intend to fight.[73]

This letter reached Clive at 3 p.m. on 22 June at Cutwa, where he was staying, and on the same day, he replied:

I am determined to risque everything on your account, though you will not exert yourself. I shall be on the other side of the river this evening. If you will join me at Placis, I will march half way to meet you, then the whole Nabob's army will know I fight for you. Give me (leave) to call to your mind how much your own glory and safety depends upon it. Be assured if you do this you will be *Subah* of these Provinces.[74]

On 22 June, the English force left Cutwa, and reached Plassey Grove about twelve at night. Next day at 7 in the morning, Clive, fearing lest Mir Jafar should go back upon his word, sent to him an urgent message: 'If you will come to Daudipore I will march from Placis to meet you, but if you won't comply even with this, pardon me, I shall make it up with the Nabob.'[75]

'At daybreak' on (23 June), the English 'discovered the Nabob's army, consisting of about 15,000 horse and 35,000 foot with upwards of 40 pieces of cannon, moving towards them. (This is Clive's estimate of the Nawab's army.) What happened then is narrated thus by Clive:

They approached apace and by 6 began the attack with a number of heavy cannon supported by the whole army, and continued to play upon us very briskly for several hours, during which our very advantageous situation saved us greatly, being possessed of a large *tope* surrounded with a good mud bank. To succeed in an attempt on their cannon was next to impossible, as they were planted in a manner round us and a considerable distance from each other; we therefore remained quiet in our post in expectation of a successful attack upon their camp at night.[76]

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 420. [74] *Ibid.*
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 440 (Clive's letter dated 2 July to Select Committee, Fort Saint George).
[76] *Ibid.*

'The cannonading continued on both sides till about 2 o'clock' when the Nawab's army began 'retiring into their Lines'.[77] Why did the Nawab's army retire when they were in an advantageous position is a question whose only answer is treachery. How Mir Jafar and other traitors would behave on the battlefield had not been revealed in the correspondence he had with Clive, apparently for fear lest the secret should leak out. While Mir Jafar had turned a determined foe of the Nawab, Clive still entertained misgivings which must have increased when he did not receive any reply from Mir Jafar to his letter of 22 June. That the future before him was not free from misgiving is obvious from that letter, in which he contemplated making terms with Siraj-ud-daula in the event of Mir Jafar backing out. Perhaps it was in a state of uncertainty of mind that he retired to Plassay House, a small hunting lodge, and was there when 'cannonading' was going on on both sides. Later, this absence at a crucial hour constituted a charge against him, which was that while the English were facing a life-and-death struggle, Clive was 'sleeping' in Plassey House. The explanation given was that he had gone to change his clothes which went wet due to a sudden shower of rain. According to the Journal of Captain Eyre Coote, who was on the spot, Clive was in Plassey House up to 12 noon. And when he came at that hour, he 'called the captains together', Coote goes on to say, 'to hold a Council of war, but changing his mind returned without holding one'.[78] Evidently, he was yet in the same state of uncertainty. When Siraj-ud-daula's army was 'retiring', Major Killpatrick 'marched out' of Plassey Grove 'with his division and took possession of the tank' that the army 'had quitted'.[79] While this was happening, Clive was yet in Plassey House; 'word was brought him', says Walsh, 'that a part of his troops were marching out of the Grove towards a small eminence on which the crops of French in Suraja Dowlet's Army had been posted. Surprised that such a motion should be made without his orders, he instantly hastened to the party, at the head of which he found Major Kilpatrick, whom he reprimanded for his unsoldier-like conduct and ordered him back to the Grove.'[80] Clive must have considered it a hazardous adventure; he was sticking to his decision that the attack must be made at night. But when he arrived on the spot, he changed his mind. Nobody has revealed

[77] Hill, vol. III, p. 55. (Journal of Captain Eyre Coote.)
[78] *Ibid.* [79] *Ibid.*
[80] *Ibid.*, p. 404 (Walsh's letter published in *East India Stock* in 1763).

what made him do so. An encouraging change in the situation must have taken place; and of this an idea can be had from Mir Jafar's letter which he sent to Clive in the afternoon, and which Clive received at 5 p.m.:

> Meer Murdun was wounded by a ball and is since dead. *Buxshee* Hazarry is killed, and ten or fifteen horsemen are killed and wounded. Roydullubrum, Lutee Codair Cawn, and myself are moved from the right to the left. Make a great and sudden discharge and they will run away and we shall do our part. The Colonel, the Rajah, Cawn, and myself, we four men, must absolutely consult together on the proper measures to be taken. We will certainly finish the metter; the *bildars* and *beldears* (gunmen and pioneers) have acted according to their agreement. I swear by my Prophet that the above is fact.[81]

Though Mir Jafar had also suggested in the above letter that the Nawab should be attacked at 3 in the morning, promising that his (the Nawab's) men 'will run away', Clive must have found the situation favourable, and continued the action Killpatrick had already begun. How the situation turned in favour of the English is told in *Revolutions in Bengal*:

> The firing was lively for four hours and the Nawab would have won the victory if he had only charged the English with the body of troops entrusted to him, but having discovered the meaning of Mir Jafar's manoeuver, who, instead of supporting him, was withdrawing with all his men, he had no further doubt of his treachery. He was terrified and thought only of flight. He sent orders to our Frenchmen to withdraw and hurriedly retreated to Murshidabad.[82]

In such a situation, the winning of battle became very easy. Says Coote: 'perceiving the enemy retire on all sides, I was ordered to march into their lines, which I entered without opposition; the remainder of the army were then ordered to march, while we pursued the enemy which we continued till it was dusk, and halted at Doudpore, about six miles from the field of battle.'[83] Clive, explaining the cause of the rout of the Nawab's army

[81] Hill, vol. II, pp. 423-4.
[82] Hill, vol. III, p. 241 (in the British Museum, Add. Ms., 20, 914).
[83] *Ibid.*, pp. 55-6.

before the Parliamentary Committee (in 1772), said: 'Serajah Dowla had not confidence in his army, nor his army any confidence in him, and therefore they did not do their duty upon that occasion.'[84]

In this decisive battle of the British period in Indian history only four Europeans and sixteen Indian sepoys (including two jamadars) were killed; those wounded numbered eleven Europeans and thirty-six Indian sepoys. The Nawab's army lost about 500 men; killed, three elephants, and a great number of horses. Siraj-ud-daula fled on a camel belonging to one of his servants. Arriving in Murshidabad, he 'despatched away what jewels and treasure he conveniently could, and followed himself at midnight attended only by four or five persons'.[85] Travelling by boat, the fugitives arrived close to Raj Mahal on 30 June. Being 'fatigued with confinement in the boat', Siraj-ud-daula went ashore whilst his attendants prepared a meal; and there his last misfortune awaited him. 'Though he had disguised himself in mean clothing, he was recognised by a man named Dana Shah', whom he had disfigured as a punishment. Dana Shah quietly conveyed the news to Mir Daud, Faujdar of Raj Mahal (brother of Mir Jafar), who promptly sent a guard, who seized the Nawab and took him to Murshidabad. To decide what should be done of Siraj-ud-daula, Mir Jafar held a council. A prompt decision could not be taken, and he handed over the prisoner to his son Miran, who, in spite of his father's instruction, or (as Watts says) with his tacit approval, had him murdered by one Mohammad Beg.

Siraj-ud-daula was only twenty years of age[86] at the time of his death. At this age, it was humanly impossible for him, for any one, to prove superior to the collective treachery, machination, and trickery of a score of persons, all possessiong rich and varied experience of the world, and all, employing all the evil genius they were capable of, hatching one of the most foolproof conspiracies ever practised on battlefields. The principal men at the head of the Nawab's army were Mir Jafar, Rai Durlabh Ram, Yar Lutf Khan (also known as Khudadad Khan Lati, first chosen by the English for the Nawabship), Manik Chand, Mir Kasim, Mohan Lal, Mir Madan, and Bahadur Ali Khan (son-in-law to Mohan Lal). Of these the first five had decided to betray their master,

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 324.
[85] Hill, vol. II, p. 441 (Clive's letter dated 2 July to Select Committee, Fort Saint George).
[86] According to Ghulam Hussain Khan.

and did so according to plan. Of the remaining three the last two were killed on the battlefield.

Mir Jafar, who had been promised the Nawabship, naturally became the chief designer of his men's performance at the battlefield. After Mir Madan had fallen dead and when Siraj-ud-daula saw that Mir Jafar, Rai Durlab Ram, and Yar Lutf Khan were not fighting but were withdrawing their forces 'to the left', he sent for Mir Jafar, placed his turban in his hands, and entreated him to defend it. He said:

> I now repent of what I have done, and, availing myself of those ties of consanguinity[87] which subsist between us as well as of those rights which my grandfather, Aliverdi Khan, has doubtless acquired upon your gratitude, I look up to you as the only representative of that venerable personage, and hope, therefore, that, forgetting my past trespasses, you shall henceforth behave as become a *Seyd* [Saiyed], a man united in blood to me, and a man of sentiments, who conserves a grateful rememberance of all the benefits he has received from my family. I recommend myself to you; take care of the conservation of my honour and life.[88]

This moving appeal aroused some feeling of compassion in Mir Jafar and he swore on the Koran to be faithful to him. The emotion passed away as quickly as it came, but the burden of the oath remained on his chest. It was too late now to undo the conspiracy, and he circumvented the oath—cheating the Koran itself—by writing thus to Clive:

> I was in the Nabob's presence on this plain, and observed that everbyody was intimidated. He sent for me and flung his *turband* off before me, and one day he made me write on the side of the Koran so that I cannot come over to you. By the blessing of God you have the better of the day. Meer Murdun was wounded by a ball and is since dead. Buxshee Hazarry is killed, and ten or fifteen horsemen are killed and wounded. Roydull-brum, Luttee Codair Cawn, and myself are moved from the right to the left. Make a great and sudden discharge and they will run away and we shall do our part.[89]

These three did not fight for the English and did not fight for

[87] Mir Jafar was brother-in-law of Alivardi Khan.
[88] *Seir Mutaqherin,* vol. II, p. 232. [89] Hill, vol. II, p. 423.

the Nawab either, but by the withdrawal of their forces 'to the left', gave the Nawab unmistakable proof of their treachery, who, completely disappointed and demoralised, abandoned the battle.

Of the traitors, two—Manik Chand and Mir Kasim—headed the fighting forces. Manik Chand's mysterious behaviour at Calcutta, when the English recaptured that town and other places in the last week of December 1756, and first week of January 1757, was enough to arouse suspicion; Mir Kasim was a son-in-law of Mir Jafar. These two persons do not figure in the correspondenec that passed between the Nawab's men at Murshidabad and Clive and between the latter and the English spies at Murshidabad. Manik Chand seems to have kept his plan of betrayal a carefully guarded secret, which could not become known until after the successful conclusion of the 'revolution'. The very next day of the battle of Plassey, Clive wrote a letter (24 June) to Manik Chand, saying: 'I before was informed of your friendly sentiments by Mr. Watts.... From Jaffir Ally Cawn Bahadre I am informed you have joined him.... My advice at present is that you act so as that the enemy shall not escape.' (The reference is to the efforts being made to capture Siraj-ud-daula.) It is difficult to say when he joined Mir Jafar—during the days of the hatching of the conspiracy, on the battlefield, or after the rout of the Nawab's army. According to Clive, Mohan Lal and Manik Chand 'were the first to retreat, and were presently followed by the Nabob, Meer Cossim and others'.[90] Mohan Lal's loyalty to Siraj-ud-daula is acknowledged by every account of the time as being above suspicion. But while Mohan Lal and his son, who had fled, were made prisoners, Manik Chand was allowed free association with Mir Jafar and other conspirators as if he was one of them. Maybe the attenuating circumstance in his favour was that he did not run away and offered his co-operation immediately after the flight of Siraj-ud-daula. Later, Mohan Lal too was taken into confidence, and this is another factor which can be cited if Manik Chand's character is sought to be vindicated. But his 'friendly sentiments' towards the English, which he had been displaying ever since Fulta, prove either his timidity or his loyalty to them which they might have secured in consideration of money or promises.

Of the other three, Rai Durlabh Ram and Yar Lutf Khan, were, as is admitted by Mir Jafar and Clive, among the chief conspirators. The fifth, Mir Kasim, who also hurriedly retreated,

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 427 (Letter to Select Committee, Fort William).

when Siraj-ud-daula was made prisoner, not only insulted and abused him, but cruelly treated his wife Lutfunnisa, and took possession of her jewels 'supposed to be worth many lakhs of rupees'.[91]

Thus was laid the foundation of British rule in Bengal—a foundation over which the superstructure had yet to be built up. Thus was turned into reality by the English 'a probability', suggested, several years before the happenings of 1756 and 1757, by Colonel Scot, 'of success in bringing about a Revolution to their advantage' (the words are of Charles F. Noble's). And thus was proved how sound was Noble's understanding of men and affairs; he had said (in his letter dated 22 September 1756 to the Select Committee, Fort Saint George): 'I look on old Omy Chund as the man in Bengal the most capable of serving us if he has a mind of it'.[92]

It was this Battle of Plassey, in which treason and not arms made the decision, which established Clive's claim for rapid promotions, the last one making him Baron of Plassey, and which, in a brief period, made him one of the wealthiest men of England.

[91] *Seir Mutaqherin,* vol. II, p. 240.
[92] Hill, vol. III, p. 328.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Mir Jafar as Nawab : English the Real Rulers

On 24 June, Clive despatched a letter, through Scrafton, to Mir Jafar congratulating him 'on the victory', and saying 'the victory is yours, not mine'. Apparently before this letter reached him, Mir Jafar had started for Clive's camp, harbouring in his breast a misgiving as to the reception he would get from the Colonel; he had not fired a shot for the English and feared he might have displeased Clive. When he reached the camp, and the guard turned out 'to receive him as he passed, he started as if he thought it was all over with him; nor did his countenance brighten up till the Colonel embraced him, and saluted him *Subah* of the three provinces'.[1] And Mir Jafar, in his turn, 'made many expressions of gratitude to the English, and assured' them 'he would be faithful to his treaty'.[2] He then hastened to Murshidabad, accompanied by Watts and Walsh, Clive staying behind with his forces at Daudpur, six miles from the capital. On 26 June, the ceremony of the new Nawab's installation was gone through. On 29 June, Clive entered the capital with 200 European and 500 Indian soldiers. 'The inhabitants,' says Clive, 'who were spectators upon that occasion, must have amounted to some hundred thousands; and if they had had an inclinatiin to have destroyed the Europeans, they might have done it with sticks and stones'.[3] But inhabitants were always unconcerned spectators in all wars, and made no expression of offence. The same day Clive, as he says, 'waited on' Mir Jafar 'being escorted to him by his son'. So overwhelmed was he with gratitude that he 'declined taking his seat on the *musnud*' until seated on it by Clive. This being done Clive 'saluted him as Nabob, upon which his courtiers congratulated him and paid him the usual homage.'[4] What a funny scene it must have looked!

[1] Scrafton, *Reflections,* p. 95. [2] Hill, vol. II, p. 428.
[3] Hill, vol. III, pp. 324-5 (Clive's evidence before the Parliamentary Committee).
[4] Hill, vol. II, p. 437 (Clive's letter dated 30 June 1757 to Select Committee, Fort William).

Mir Jafar is spoken of quite highly in Law's *Memoir*:

> This Mir Jafar Ali Khan had been for many years *Bakshi* or Generalissimo of the army. He had enjoyed the particular confidence of Aliverdikhan, who, on his deathbed, had recommended Siraj-uddaula to him and made him swear on the Koran never to abandon him. I am certain he intended to keep his word.
>
> Mir Jafar had always passed for a brave and scrupulously upright man. Without his support Siraj-ud-daula would never have been Nawab. He alone kept him on his throne. He ought therefore to have had the greatest respect for this general.... Impatient of all restraint and of all those whose rank gave them the right to make representations to him, the greatest and most cutting insults cost him nothing. Mir Jafar, the favourite of Aliverdikhan, had much trouble in accustoming himself to ill-treatment. He was only restrained by the respect due to the memory of his former master and by the remembrance of the oath he had taken. At last however he was urged beyond his patience. Siraj-ud-daula, by I know not what caprice (I believe Raja Mohan Lal had something to do with it) after having addressed to Mir Jafar Ali Khan the most insulting epithets in full *Durbar* deprived him of his office of Bakshi. Mir Jafar outraged by the manner in which he had been treated accepted the proposals which had already been made to him several times by the Seths and entered into a treaty with Mr. Watts. Mir Jafar was loved by the people; he had with him almost all the great officers of the army, to whom also there were heavy arrears of pay due from Siraj-uddaula.[5]

Whatever Mir Jafar may have been in the past, he was no more a 'brave' and 'upright' person; he no doubt headed the Government of Bengal, but Clive was, and was supposed to be all around, the virtual ruler. Clive lost no time in making himself known as such and creating an impression that the supreme power in Bengal, which sustained the Nawabship, resided in the English. It was to Clive that the principal feudatory chiefs submitted their obeisances; it was Clive who sought their co-operation and promised them protection; it was Clive to whom the principal men in the treachery addressed congratulatory letter; and it was Clive who arranged to get imperial approval of the appointment of the new Nawab. When Clive was on his march towards Plassey,

[5] Hill, vol. III, p. 211.

he had known that Asad-uz-zaman, Raja of Birbhum, had been made hostile to Siraj-ud-daula, and had written to him inviting his help for the 'revolution', but the Raja's reply, saying 'by the blessing of God I will arrive with my army and will certainly join you'[6] reached Clive on 26 June (after all was over); the Raja may have deliberately delayed the reply. When Clive apprised him of his success, the Raja wrote back (2 July):

> I hope in God that success will attend the man that favours me so much. By the oppression of the Government I was deprived of all power in my country. By your favour I hope to be restored to it. I cannot express my gratitude to you, but while I live I shall think myself bound to the man who has lifted me up, and whose hand has supported me. I am always ready to obey your commands.... You are the revenger of injuries and the support of the oppressed.'[7]

Raja Swarup Chand of Burdwan wrote in his congratulatory letter (6 July) to Clive: 'I thank God that he has blest you with so great a victory; it gave me infinite satisfaction. I was praying to God that you might increase in riches and power, and it has been as my heart desired.... I hope your favour will continue towards me, and that I shall be freed from the oppression I labour under.'[8]

To Ram Narain, the Nawab's deputy at Patna, Clive wrote, after proudly narrating his 'victory': 'I therefore recommend it to you to acquire his favour by a ready obedience to his (Mir Jafar's) commands, and that you give orders that he be proclaimed and acknowledged throughout the province under your Government.' Clive also asked Ram Narain to make 'best endeavours to seize and deliver up Mons. Law and all the French and their servants in the province' to the English, adding, by this 'you will acquire my friendship.'[9] And Ram Narain wrote back to say: 'I am ready to follow whatever advice Mr. Pearkies, your gomastah, may give me.... Agreeable to Mr. Pearkies advice, I have sent a body of men after Mr. Law and I am ready to assist him: in everything I look on the acting agreeable to your pleasure as a happiness.[10]

Clive instructs Rai Durlabh, now the Nawab's Diwan: 'The

[6] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.,* (Col. Clive's Correspondence, No. 182).
[7] *Ibid.,* (No. 187). [8] *Ibid.,* (No. 193).
[9] *Ibid.,* (Letter dated 5 July, No. 191).
[10] *Ibid.,* (Letter dated 28 July, No. 202).

weight of the Government's affairs is now on you; you have our friendship in your power. Don't look on it as of little consideration.... I always persuade myself you look on the Company's business as your own.[11]... Always serve the Nabob like a wise Dewan and shew him a true zeal for his service.'[12] And Rai Durlabh makes agreeable replies.

Clive and other conspirators also reaffirm their fidelity to each other, the former asserting his domination and extending his patronage. The Jagat Seth tells Clive: 'My heart is elated with gladness past expression. The friendship with you is truly sincere as I am yours. I look for your favour. Be pleased to accept of ten Europe pomegranates, which I now send you.'[13] (This letter was written on the third day of Plassey, 25 June.) To Khwaja Wajid, Clive wrote: 'I always reflect with pleasure on your agreeable friendly behaviour to me at Chinchura. I hope God will long preserve you in your present happy condition.'[14]

It was Clive, who made it his concern to obtain a formal *farman* from the Mughal Emperor of Delhi, a mere titular head of the disintegrated empire. On 30 July, he wrote a letter to Alamgir Sanee, boasting of English 'victories' of 5 February, and 23 June, and full of falsehoods. He said:

> Siraj-ud-daula broke his oath and joined with the enemies of the English to destroy them.... He was killed by his servants who followed him to demand their pay.... By the consent of all the great men of the city, Jaffer Cawn Bahadre succeeded him, a man just and merciful as his predecessor was wicked and cruel. He therefore beseeches your Majesty that you will grant him a sunnud for the Subaship of these three provinces. I have joined him with 25,000 matchless sepoys, and if it please God there shall be nothing wanting to make the country flourish and the subjects happy.... I am always ready with my life to obey your Majesty's commands.[15]

He sent a similar letter to the Emperor's Prime Minister. Bribery could get any *farman* from Delhi, and the Jagat Seth, says Clive, 'undertook to use his whole interests at Delhi, which is certainly very considerable, to get the Nabob acknowledged by the Mogul and

[11] *Ibid.*, (Letter dated 21 July, No. 298).
[12] *Ibid.*, (Letter dated 12 October, No. 230).
[13] *Ibid.*, (No. 178).
[14] *Ibid.*, (Letter dated 4 September, No. 212).
[15] *Ibid.*, (No. 203).

our late grants confirmed, likewise procure for us any other *phirmaunds* we might have occasion for'.[16]

It was again Clive who gave an undertaking to Balaji Rao Peshwa (entitled Nana) to make payments of *chowth* the right to which the Marathas had exacted from Alivardi Khan. 'I have wrote to the Nanna,' says Clive in his letter to the Secret Committee, London (6 August), 'of our strict alliance with the present Nabob, and that I have engaged his promise that the customary annual *chout* shall be duly paid'.[17]

In order that his 'victory' might be echosed in the South and his 'greatness' recognised, he sent proud letters to the rulers of the South. In his letter to the Nawab of Arcot, Mohamad Ali, he said, exaggerating his feats and indulging, as usual, in falsehood: 'On the 23rd June at daybreak his (Siraj-ud-daula's) whole army consisting of 100,000 men,[18] appeared in sight on the extensive plains of Placis. The battle immediately began, and at 4 in the evening God declared for us, and this vast army was entirely defeated. Many of his principal officers and 4,000 men[19] were left on the field of battle . . . and in a few days Siraja Dowla was killed by them that pursued' him.[20] He sent a similar letter to the Nizam.[21]

Clive now desired to be consulted by the Nawab even on the appointments to be made for high government posts, pretending that his only motive was to protect the Nawab's interest. This is what he said in his letter (15 July) to Mir Jafar:

> Whenever I write to your Excellency it is the same as if I was writing to my father. Such regard and friendship as a son has for his father, such have I for your Excellency's advantage. I hear the first of the New Moon you intend to nominate all your officers, I shall take it as a particular favour if your Excellency will permit me to see a list of them, and if I hear there be any that are not attached to your Excellency's person, I will acquaint you with it, it being my duty to do so.[22]

[16] Hill, vol. II, p. 459 (Clive's letter dated 26 July, to the Secret Committee, London).
[17] Hill, vol. II, p. 465.
[18] In his despatches to his compatriots, he said the army consisted of 50,000.
[19] To his compatriots, he said the Nawab's loss amounted to 500 men.
[20] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, (Col. Clive's Correspondence, No. 205).
[21] *Ibid.*, (No. 206). [22] *Ibid.*, (No. 196).

(When he came to re-establish the English in Bengal, Clive had addressed Siraj-ud-daula also as father.)

Like an experienced ruler, Clive cast his vigilant eyes in all directions. The object which he sought to serve by his vigilance was: (1) to prevent French alliance with any other power; for, if such an alliance subverted the 'revolution' the conspiracy had just brought about, the result would be disastrous for the English, and the French would get the advantageous position now occupied by the English; and (2) to stabilise Mir Jafar's government; for, only from stability thereof could flow peaceful accomplishment of the privileges and advantages the English had planned to gain from the new Nawab.

After the accession of Mir Jafar, Clive asked regional chiefs to deliver to him the French in their territories. When he suspected Ram Narain, the Nawab's deputy at Patna, of helping the French to slip quietly out of his territory, he complained to Rai Durlabh:

> There is nothing in this world that I have so much at heart as to drive out the French I have just now received news that Ramnarain, regardless of what the Nabob and myself have wrote, instead of stopping the French has let them go to Patna.... I write to you as a friend, that you send express orders to have the above Frenchmen seized and sent to me . . . that Law and his party be attacked wherever they can be found; their passage and provisions stopt.[23]

And Rai Durlabh wrote in reply: 'If Ramnarain does not obey us we together will punish him.'[24] (Clive's policy was to win over and oblige the people connected with the government and not to antagonise them; only a short while later, we find Clive pleading with Mir Jafar on behalf of Ram Narain, and getting him confirmed in his Patna job. Ram Narain is beholden to Clive, and tells him: 'Your protection gains me the Nabob's favour.[25] If all the hairs of my head could speak they could not express how much I am obliged to you.'[26] Similarly, Clive resecured Nawab's favour for Raja Ram, the Faujdar of Midnapore, and obtained liberty for the Faujdar's relatives who had been put in confinement by the Nawab.)

Clive asked Durlabh Ram to instruct all the feudal chiefs in the territories of Bengal to capture the French 'wherever they find

[23] *Ibid.*, (Letter dated 21 July, No. 198).
[24] *Ibid.*, (Letter dated 22 July, No. 199).
[25] *Ibid.*, (No. 397). [26] *Ibid.*, (No. 398).

them'.[27] To some of them, he himself sent out instructions, promising them to protect their interests. The prominent of these were the Rajas of Birbhum and Dinajpur. In order to establish his loyalty to Clive, the Raja of Birbhum transcended all limits of absurdity. While reporting to Clive that he had taken into custody some Frenchmen found in his estate, he said that they were refusing to go to the English, and asked Clive: 'If you will order me to send their heads I will.'[28] There was to be no severing of heads from the bodies, and the suggestion was employed only to show how abundant was the Raja's loyalty to Clive. The French were later forcibly sent and delivered to the English.[29] Before carrying out the behest of Clive, the Raja made an offer to him: 'My country is yours, you may build houses or whatever you please in it.'[30] The Raja was once involved (in January 1758) in a battle, on behalf of his uncle, with Raja Sundar Singh, another feudal chief. He duly informed Clive of his intention to do so; but the decision on the field went against him and his uncle, and, amusingly enough it was Sundar Singh (to fight whom the Raja of Birbhum had asked Clive for a loan of 'one or two hundred soldiers'[31]) who presented Clive with two gold *mohurs*, and wrote to him: 'I will not fail to inform you if anything further should happen.'[32] But Clive administered a mild rebuke to the victor: 'I am very sorry that any disturbances should happen among the Nabob's subjects which can only end in defrauding the Nabob of his revenues. For the future I hope all will be peace and then trade will flourish.'[33]

The story of how the downfall of an independent ruler had been brought about did not travel far; the one that spread far and wide was of the 'heroic victory' of British arms over a huge army of the Nawab of Bengal. This became a great historic event to establish British superiority and to strike awe in Indian rulers, all independent, afraid and envious of each other. Information of the English desire to track the French was conveyed to distant places like Oudh, and the Nawab of that province was asked to co-operate with the English. The Nawab (Shuja-ud-daula), as if respectfully obeying the order, wrote back to say:

> The letter you wrote me advising the driving out of Mr. Law

[27] *Ibid.*, (Clive's letter dated 12 Oct., No. 230).
[28] *Ibid.*, (Letter to Clive, 4 Nov., No. 258).
[29] *Ibid.*, (Letter to Clive, dated 18 Nov., No. 280).
[30] *Ibid.*, (Letter to Clive, dated 28 Oct., No. 248).
[31] *Ibid.*, (No. 332). [32] *Ibid.*, (No. 341).
[33] *Ibid.*, (Clive's letter dated 1 Sept., 1758, No. 342).

and the other Frenchmen and desiring me that as you have a zealous regard for my welfare and are my friend that I should oppose them, I have received and perused. But before the receipt of this letter, in consideration of the former friendship between us I wrote expressly to Bulwant Sing Bahadre to prevent their passage into my bounderys. But by the humble address of Bulwunt Singh it appears the French before his receiving my purwannah had proceeded towards Deckan. In future I shall let no one pass. Be confident of me in every thing and always acquaint me with your welfare.[34]

But an intelligence from Omar Kuli Khan, who was the Bengal Government's agent at Shuja-ud-daula's court, created apprehension of an attack by the Oudh ruler. Omar Kuli Khan's letter, which was addressed to Omar Beg Khan, an officer of Mir Jafar, said:

> Your reputation is lost by the Fringees [the English] having defeated you [i.e. Siraj-ud-daula's army]. Therefore they all cry out they are no soldiers in Bengal and there's great riches, let us enter and possess ourselves of it.... It is necessary the Nabob should show himself a soldier.... Let him come to Patna and enlist the soldiers of this part of the country.... Raja Ram Narain can't stand it a minute.... If they hear the Nabob is got there himself they will be intimidated. The Rajah of Benares has wrote several times to Shuja-ud-Doula to enter the country, or that Patna is empty.[35]

Clive had just then received information of the arrival of ten French ships—whether they were 'ships of force' he did not know—and was apprehensive of French-Oudh alliance; the only relieving part of the information was that the French General, Bussy, was going to engage himself in a South Indian theatre of war and could not spare himself for an action against the English in Bengal.[36] Clive passed on this information to Mir Jafar, adding 'that the people of Patna were hatching some evil designs against' him.[37] Clive had become, by self-appropriation, not only the political informant of the Nawab, but also his adviser and prompter; he professed to be, and perhaps was, better posted with political

[34] *Ibid.*, (Shuja-ud-daula's letter to Major Coote, No. 210).
[35] *Ibid.*, (No. 209).
[36] *Ibid.*, (Nos. 219 and 220).
[37] *Ibid.*, (Clive's letter dated 14 Oct., 1757, No. 231).

developments in the country. About the threat from Oudh, the prudent way that suggested itself was that, when Mir Jafar had reached Patna with his forces and had thus given proof of his ability to fight, he should conclude a treaty of peace with Shuja-ud-daula. But Clive warned him:

> 'I have heard there has always been great enmity between the Vizier [the Delhi Emperor's Prime Minister] and Shuja-ud-Doula's family, and perhaps Shuja-ud-Doula's apprehensions may have made him desirous of your friendship and assistance; your ent'ring into a public treaty with him may displease the Court [the Delhi Court], and make them your enemies; if you write him sweet words and tell him that you are getting a great army ready, and that it has been your design for some months past to march to Patna it will be sufficient.[38]

The Nawab started preparations for his march to Patna, but it was not until a few weeks had elapsed that he advised Clive about it and casually asked him for co-operation: 'I desire you will write me what time you propose.'[39] Clive's reaction to this communication was a display of grievance: 'This is the first time you wrote me that I should march up to join you; however I will immediately give orders to have my army collected together. I must desire you will advance according to Treaty one lack of rupees, as that will be about the expence of one month for the whole army.'[40] Two days later, he again protested: 'I am sorry to find your Excellency does not think proper to communicate to me the situation of your affairs in so full and friendly a manner as my attachment to your services merits.' He emphasised the seriousness of the situation at Patna, saying: 'I am informed from other hands of what Ramnarain is about, and how much discontent reigns throughout your dominions. This has determined me to hasten my march to join you.'[41] The Nawab's letter to Clive does not suggest the former's anxiety to enlist the latter's help, but Clive's natural wish to maintain the prevailing assumption of British superiority and to guard against the likelihood of conciliation between the French and the Nawab, who had had no cause of complaint against them, must have suggested how inevitable was it for English force to accompany the Nawab to Patna. The new government being yet

[38] *Ibid.*, (Clive's letter dated 26 Oct., 1757, No. 239).
[39] *Ibid.*, (Nawab's letter. recd. 4 Nov., No. 260).
[40] *Ibid.*, (4 Nov., No. 261). [41] (6 Nov., No. 262).

in an unsettled state, the Nawab pleaded apologetically: 'How can I think of writing you anything when I am not certain of it. It gives me great pleasure to hear that you have pitched your tent. I am thereby grown stronger. . . . By the favour of God I hope you will enjoy long life.'[42] In another letter, he conveyed the information of his having ordered Rs. 50,000 to be paid.[43]

Earlier, Clive had informed the Nawab of local risings and exhorted him to act. His letter (2 Oct. 1757) said:

> I have just heard from Mr. Watts that two of your Jemidars have rebelled against you in the Purneo [Purnia] country, and set up the brother of Shokat Jung. Yesterday I informed you of some bad designs at Patna. All these things make it necessary that you should take the field as soon as possible, and exert yourself in an extraordinary manner. You know I am always ready to assist you with my force and advice. . . . Whenever you find any of your Jemidars wanting either in fidelty or courage you should always turn them out of your service. I would advise you not to delay a moment in sending forces under a good Jemidar to put an end to this rebellion. I have ordered Captain Grant with a detachment of military sepoys and cannon to be in readiness to assist and join whomsoever you may think proper to send into that country.[44]

The Nawab, in accordance with this instruction, sent a force to 'quell the rebellion',[45] and demanded from Clive the assistance of 500 'fighting men' which request the latter at once complied with.

The South being already bent before British diplomacy and it being known that the Company put up puppets on the thrones as a matter of policy, the Nabob of Arcot offered to Clive a suggestion for Bengal: 'I trust that when you have concluded matters in Bengal to your satisfaction, you will send for my Naib (Deputy) and give him the charge of the country.'[46]

It was Clive, who got Durlabh Ram the Prime Ministership of Bengal, and it was he who maintained the latter in that position in spite of Mir Jafar's suspicion—supposed by Clive to be ground-

[42] *Ibid.*, (Without date; received 4 Nov., No. 272).
[43] *Ibid.*, (Without date; received 4 Nov., No. 273).
[44] *Ibid.*, (No. 222). [45] *Ibid.*, (No. 232).
[46] *Ibid.*, (Dated 5 Sept.; recd. 5 Oct., No. 223).

less—of Durlabh Ram conspiring against him. Durlabh Ram, says Clive (in his letter dated 23 December 1757 to the Secret Committee of the Company in London), 'was suspected to be engrossing the Power in his hands, and rather to have encouraged the three Rebellions than endeavoured to suppress them'. The suspicion extended to Siraj-ud-daula's brother, who, the Nawab and his son believed, was designed to be made Nawab, and the poor wretch was executed. Durlabh Ram, terror-stricken lest he should meet the same fate, shut himself indoors 'on a pretence of sickness', and assembled 'a large body of his own troops with him as' was 'usual' those days.[47] When Clive talked to the Nawab about this affair, the latter pretended complete ignorance and shifted the blame for the murder of Siraj-ud-daula's brother on to his son, Miran. (He had made the same pretence in the case of the murder of Siraj-ud-daula.) Clive exerted his influenc, and Durlabh Ram retained his job. Durlabh Ram, in his turn, had become essential to the interests of the English, 'as', says Clive, 'no Durbar business can be transacted without him, and we have some Points to settle of great Consequence to' the Company's 'interest'.[48]

About five months later, Durlabh Ram again came under shade, and Miran 'expressed himself' in the 'presence' of Scrafton 'that he suspected' Durlabh Ram 'of evil intentions towards him'. 'When I heard these things', Clive says, 'I was more wounded than if I had been struck with a cannon ball', and interpreted Miran as suspicious of the English. Clive protested:

> When were the English known to do bad things that such injurious thoughts should be entertained of them. It was at Placis I risqued my life, my reputation and the very being of the Company to establish you and your family, and it was at the Seat's house that the strictest alliance was concluded by oath between your Excellency, the Seats, Roydulub and myself; ... when these things are heard at Delhi, Sujait Doula's [Shuja-ud-daula's], and the Morattoes [Marathas] Country, they will say these people are quarrelling among themselves, now is the proper time to take the rich subaship of Bengal from Jaffer Ally Cawn. For my own part if I find the upright manner in which I have hitherto acted and the solemn oath I have sworn to your Excellency, cannot exempt me from unnatural suspicions, I am determined to return to Chinapatam, where I shall find the affection

[47] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.,* (Last part, p. 24).
[48] *Ibid.*

of a father from Nabob Mahmud Ally Cawn who has seen proofs of my attachment to him for more than ten years.[49]

The Nawab knew that Clive's anger would never remove him (Clive) to the South, but would manifest itself in some unpleasant manner that might jeopardise his (Nawab's) position, and submitted to him with all the flattery he was capable of. The Nawab said in his reply:

> You must not think of going to Chinapatam. I have a greater regard for you than any of my sons, and so I have for Dullubram Bahadre than any of my brothers. Even when you was displeased with him I show'd him favor, and I am fully persuaded his intentions are good. By the goodness of God whatever I enjoy is entirely owing to your favour and friendship. . . . I swear by God if I had a thousand tongues I could not express the obligations I am under to you. ... It is proper you should show me the same favor as at first.[50]

So discomforted did the Nawab become or pretend to become that he 'deferr'd' his projected visit to the Durga deity 'to make my offerings'.[51] (Mir Jafar paid devotional visits to Durga before setting out for a big task; he was then shortly going to begin his march towards Patna.)

High officers like Durlabh Ram and Ram Narain, big and small landlords, rebellious chieftains, and many others, being afraid of the English, and more obedient to them than to the Nawab, and the Nawab himself being in fear of an attack from the north and trouble from the rebels in his own dominions, and beholden to Clive, not only for putting him on the throne, but also for endeavouring to secure his confirmation from the Delhi Court, Clive's word was law, and even mild questioning by the Nawab made Clive angry, and the Nawab had no alternative but to make an abject surrender. Clive applied for a permit for virtual monopoly to buy saltpetre, pleading that the Company would pay the same price as others did. Rightly believing that the monopoly would injure the interest of other traders, Mir Jafar did not agree to the request, and was afflicted by the following outburst by Clive:

[49] *Bengal & Madras Papers,* vol. III (1757-1795), (Clive's Correspondence; letter dated 18 May 1758, No. 499).
[50] *Ibid.,* (Letter dated 23 May, No. 503). [51] *Ibid.*

> This affair of the saltpetre is the only favor I have asked of you. . . . I am sick in body, but much more so in mind, for it is with great grief of mind I observe your favor for the English decreasing daily. It is true when any reports of the Mahrattas or Sujah-ud-Dowla's coming into this country prevails, then we are thought useful, at all other times the English are thought troublesome. . . . We are the same people who obtained you the Subaship and preserved your life at Placis, and that we are determined to support Your Excellency in your present great state against all your enemies as long as we have a man left.[52]

Clive, however, made a semblance of concession to the Nawab; he said (in the same letter): the Company would 'supply you with any quantity you may want at the price it costs us'. And the Nawab wrote back: 'You are my son and dearer to me than my life; the connections that are between us cannot be equalled in this world. By the favour of God I always act for your satisfaction and the English interest.'[53] The monopoly was considered inevitable, and the only thing the Nawab could do to lessen its effect was to ask for 50,000 maunds of saltpetre for his own use, arguing 'you will know that I must have powder for the use of my 3 subaships'.[54] But Clive again emerged cleverer and sarcastically told the Nawab: 'You had only to ask for the other 50,000 maunds, then this business would have been at an end.' Clive then argued that Alivardi Khan 'who kept up a very large army and was engaged in war for many years, never used a fifth part of that quantity', and said that he would be prepared to supply the quantity consumed during Alivardi Khan's time 'or even 3 or 4,000 maunds more'.[55] Clive invoked Durlabh Ram and Ram Narain's assistance in settling the saltpetre affair, and threatned to 'march away with' his 'army immediately to Calcutta'; (Clive was then camping near Murshidabad with a view to proceeding to Patna with the Nawab). The threat of withdrawal meant evidently a threat to the positions of Durlabh Ram and Ram Narain, and the former settled the affair, in consultation with the Nawab, fixing the government's needs at 15,000 maunds.[56] Saltpetre was used for making gunpowder; and of the total quantity produced in Bengal, the English were now to have 85,000 maunds and the government only one-

[52] *Ibid.*, (3 March, 1758, No. 421).
[53] *Ibid.*, (4 March, No. 422).
[54] *Ibid.*, (5 March, No. 424).
[55] *Ibid.*, (6 March, No. 425).
[56] *Ibid.*, (No. 429).

sixth of it! Within four days of Clive's complaint, the monopoly rights were granted to him, and the affair was closed with these words of Clive (to the Nawab): 'I always expected that a father would bestow more favor on his son than' on Khwaja Wajid or Khwaja Ashraft [Ashraf];[57] (a quantity of saltpetre was settled to be purchased by these two merchants before Clive asked for the monopoly).

The continued stay of Clive with his force in the neighbourhood of Murshidabad had become the most vital part of the English business in Bengal. Clive exacted obedience in the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and created a legendary terror; if he had returned to Calcutta after Plassey, he would never have built up the position he did for himself, and the supremacy would have gradually devolved upon the new Nawab. Now the rising man was Clive who completely overshadowed the Nawab. By his voluntary offer, which was ostensibly presented as compliance with the Nawab's request, Clive not only got an excuse to stay on in the neighbourhood of Murshidabad, but also to charge the expenses of the upkeep of his army to the Nawab's government. He made exaggerated demands, and his own advocate in Durlabh Ram being at the helm of the administration, payments were made quickly. But even Durlabh Ram had his limitations, for the treasury had already been exhausted (in meeting other demands under the Treaty, discussed in the next chapter) and the dues of the Nawab's own army had fallen in arrears. On 6 January 1758, Clive made the following demands on Durlabh Ram:

> We have now been near two months in the field, and I have received only one lack of rupees for the expences of my army, altho' the Nabob has ordered me 50,000 more, which I desire you will comply with. I desire you will according to your promise send two orders on your brother Coonjubeharry [Kunj Bihari], one for 6,21,800 rupees, the other for three lacks, and another on your brother Rausbeharry [Ras Bihari] for 4,37,000.[58]

Then followed Clive's angry letters to Durlabh Ram and the latter's and the Nawab's apologies and promises, and also heavy amounts of money.

In order to ensure his own safety, Durlabh Ram carried out Clive's orders meekly, and Clive exercised the authority of a ruler

[57] *Ibid.*, (No. 449).
[58] *Bengal & Madras Papers,* vol. II (Clive's Correspondence, No. 318).

over him. When the confirmation of Ram Narain's appointment as Naib at Patna was delayed, Clive, whom Ram Narain had further obliged by putting his political influence in Bihar at the disposal of the Company, virtually took Durlabh Ram to ask: 'I am much surprized at your not finishing this affair. You are the minister who transacts all business, and I can't conceive the meaning of this delay.'[59] Within a week, Clive's wish was done.

The Mughal Court lent its authority to Clive's *de facto* superiority over the Nawab by giving recognition to the 'revolution' he had brought about and to Mir Jafar as Nawab. The Mughal Emperor's Prime Minister, replying to Clive's letter, applying for recognition, said:

> You are a great man. Let the King's favour be upon you. I have received your address, enclosing one for the King, the whole particulars of which he has read. By your letter I am informed of the destruction of Calcutta and the cruel death of many of your great men by Surajah Doula. Whoever does bad things and thinks they are for his good, is possessed of false thoughts; and I am likewise informed of Meer Mahmud Jaffer Cawn's being in possession of the subbaship; of his readiness to obey the King; of his endeavours to make the country flourish; and to again the love of his subjects and of the friendship subsisting between him and you. I always regard the man who seeks the interest of his country and the good of the people; for this reason the sunnod is given to Meer Mahmud Jaffer Cawn; rely on me with confidence and look on me as one always ready to assist and favour you. By the goodness of God, according to my heart's desire, I will give you a great post hereafter.[60]

It was the influence of the Jagat Seth's bribe and high praise of English arms at the Mughal Court that secured the above letter; and it was the prospect of considerable pecuniary return that persuaded the Jagat Seth to play a leading role in the 'revolution', to proceed to Delhi to get a *sanad* for the new Nawab, and to leave there an impression of the strength and influnce of the English. The South had already known that influence; it was now extended from Calcutta to Delhi. To the Nawab himself an imperial *sanad* was not of much practical utility because Delhi's control over distant provinces had virtually lapsed; but to Clive it was

[59] *Bengal & Madras Papers*, vol. III (Clive's Correspondence, No. 404).
[60] *Ibid.*, (No date.. Recd. 15 June 1758, No. 527).

of immense use; he could now assert, with greater authority, that he enjoyed Delhi's confidence to make or remove a Nawab. When Siraj-ud-daula was in possession of the government of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, as the lawful successor of Alivardi Khan, the succession had been ratified by an imperial *sanad*, which that Nawab had obtained [December 1756] not because it was inevitable to do so, but because it would produce some psychological effect on his rivals, officers, army commanders, and the people. The English needed the same effect to be produced now when Mir Jafar was yet in an unsettled state and when the prevailing impression that Clive was the real ruler of Bengal needed to be affirmed by the imperial seal. The imperial approval further created the impression that even an imperial *sanad*-holder could be removed (as in the case of Siraj-ud-daula) and that if a removal took place the Delhi Court would only acquiesce in it. This had happened many times before; but now it happened in a different way: the English became Nawab-makers.

The poor Nawab did not know that his appointment had been approved by Delhi until Clive sent him a copy of the letter the Jagat Seth had brought.[61] His condition was far more pitiable than that of Siraj-ud-daula. To all feudal chiefs, to all important officers, Clive was the real Nawab, to whom they paid court and homage, and to him they looked for protection.

[61] *Ibid.*, (17 June, No. 529).

CHAPTER TWELVE

Further Demands of the English : Mir Jafar's Disinclination

MIR JAFAR had, until a few years ago, been a proud, self-respecting and self-reliant man, and what is commonly believed as his treachery had an attenuant in the grievance he had been nurturing since Siraj-ud-daula's accession and which grew into a deeper wound a short while before Plassey by the affront Siraj-ud-daula had inflicted on him. How long could his patience—which was a sophisticated expression for supression of self-respect and dereliction of duty—sustain him in the government, and would a time come when it woud break down? This psychological poser was bound to arise in the peculiar political conditions of Bengal. And it did.

The Treaty Mir Jafar formally executed after the assumption of the Nawabship provided:

1st. Whatever articles were agreed upon in the time of peace with the Nabob Serajah Dowla I agree to comply with.

2nd. The enemies of the English are my enemies, whether they be Indians or Europeans.

3rd. All the effects and factories belonging to the French in the provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, shall remain in the possession of the English, nor will I ever allow them any more to settle in the three provinces.

4th. In consideration of the losses which the English Company have sustained by the plunder and capture of Calcutta by the Nabob, and the charges occasioned by the maintenance of their forces, I will give them a crore of rupees.

5th. For the effects plundered from the English inhabitants of Calcutta, I agree to give fifty lacks of rupees.

6th. For the effects plundered from the Gentoos, Mussulmen, and other subjects of Calcutta, twenty lacks of rupees shall be given.

7th. For the effects plundered from the Armenian inhabitants of Calcutta, I will give seven lacks of rupees.

The distribution of the sums allotted the natives, English inhabitants, Gentoos and Mussulmen, shall be left to the Admiral, Colonel Clive, and the rest of the Council, to be disposed of by them to whom they think proper.

8th. Within the ditch, which surrounds the borders of Calcutta, are tracts of land belonging to several zemindars, besides this, I will grant the English Company 600 yards without the ditch.

9th. All the lands lying to the south of Calcutta as far as Culpee, shall be the zemindarree of the English Company, and all the officers of those parts shall be under their jurisdiction, the revenues to be paid by them (the Company) in the same manner with other *zemindars*.

10th. Whenever I demand the English assistance, I will be at the charge of the maintenance of their troops.

11th. I will not erect any new fortifications below Hooghly near the river Ganges.

12th. As soon as I am established in the government of the three provinces, the aforesaid sums shall be faithfully paid.[1]

No time-limit for the fulfilment of the Treaty is stipulated in the above terms, but Clive's letter dated 2 July 1757 to the Select Committee of Fort Saint George suggests that the Nawab had agreed to 'all the Articles to be fulfilled within one month from his accession to the *Subaship*'.[2] The letter also makes a mention of another sum of fifty lakhs of rupees to be paid 'to the army and navy'. The Treaty saddled the Nawab with a liability, in all, of Rs. 227 lakhs. But when Rai Durlabh 'examined' the treasury, on 26 June 1757, he found in it only Rs. 140 lakhs.[3] Watts and Walsh, who were then present in Murshidabad, though not in the treasury, first did not believe Rai Durlabh Ram and accused him of 'shuffling and tricking', but his statement was a fact, and had to be accepted later. Siraj-ud-daula's treasure was generally believed by the English to be much more considerable than it actually was, and it was this belief which prompted fantastic and ficticious demands to be provided in the Treaty. Never during their prolonged negotiations with Siraj-ud-daula did the English say that their losses amounted to many lakhs of rupees. On the

[1] Vansittart, *Narative of the Transactions in Bengal,* pp. 19-21, and Hill, vol. III, pp. 56-7 to Clive.
[2] Hill, vol. II, p. 442.
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 430 (Watts and Walsh's letter dated 26 June, 1957).

contrary, accounts of responsible authorities of the Company spoke in laudatory terms that Siraj-ud-daula, when he seized the Kasimbazar factory and Fort William in June 1756, did not seize the goods, which reverted to the English on their return early next year. There undoubtedly was some looting here and there, and there also were losses resulting from the June 1756 attack and consequent displacement, but they never constituted a major demand and were treated as of minor consideration in the negotiations for treaty with Siraj-ud-daula. The 'restitution' of the losses was 'left to the Nabob's justice to determine' in that treaty. No conceivable exaggeration of the losses would have raised the demand to an extent that it would swallow up the entire treasury of the government, and yet remain unsatisfied. But the new Nawab had no option to negotiate and had to sign on the dotted line.

How and during what time the demands should be satisfied was, wisely enough, left by Clive to the judgment of the Jagat Seth, 'whose determination', says Clive, 'was that we should immediately be paid one half, two thirds in money and one third in jewels, plate and goods, and that the other half should be discharged within three years at three equal and annual payments.'[4] The Jagat Seth and Durlabh Ram had got to be made beneficiaries in the booty, and Clive accorded them due consideration. He says:

> As it was absolutely necessary to satisfy Roy Dulub, who is the principal minister, and through whose hands our affairs must pass, I thought it not improper to admit him to a commission of 5 *per cent*. and Juggut Seat representing that he had been a sufferer of seven *lack* by the French, and as he was joining in measures for their extirpation, it was probable he should never be paid; I agreed . . . that he might take what goods of theirs should be found at their out-Settlements and aurungs, and the ballance should be made good by our Company.[5]

At Clive's meeting with the Jagat Seth, at which the latter settled the mode and duration of payment, Omi Chand was present—a person who had yet to be relieved of his expectation of a heavy amount as price of his treacherous contribution to the 'revolution'. 'At this meeting', says Clive, 'when the real treaty came to be read the indignation and resentment expressed in that man's countenance

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 442 (letter dated 2 July).
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 438 (Clive's letter dated 30 June 1757, to the Select Committee, Fort William.)

bars all description. He said, "This cannot be the treaty; it was a red treaty I saw".' And Clive replied, 'Yes, Omichund, but this is a white treaty.'[6] According to Orme, Omichand was not present at the meeting, but was disillusioned after it. The following is Orme's account of the pathetic episode:

> The conference being ended, Clive and Scrafton went towards Omichund, who was awaiting in full assurance of hearing the glad tidings of his good fortune, when Clive said, "It is now time to undeceive Omichund," on which Scrafton said to him in the Indostan language, "Omichund, the red paper is a trick; you are to have nothing." These words overpowered him like a blast of sulphur; he sank back fainting, and would have fallen to the ground had not one of his attendants caught him in his arms; they carried him to his *palankin,* in which they conveyed him to his house, where he remained many hours in stupid melancholy and began to show some signs of insanity. Some days after he visited Colonel Clive, who advised him to make a pilgrimage to some *pagoda*, which he accordingly did soon after to a famous one near Maulda; he went and returned insane, his mind every day approaching more and more to idiotism, and contrary to the usual manners of old age in Indostan, still more to the former excellency of his understanding, he delighted in being continually dressed in the richest garments and ornamented with the most costly jewels. In this state of imbecility he died about a year and a half after the shock of his disappointment.[7]

With unusual promptness, the Seth's award was carried out within a week, and the amounts agreed on were delivered to the agents of the Company. Orme says:

> The Committee (the select committee of Fort William) by the 6th of July 1757 received, in coined silver, 72,71,666 rupees. This treasure was packed up in 700 chests and laden in 100 boats, which proceeded under the care of soldiers to Nadiya; from whence they were escorted by all the boats of the squadron and many others, proceeding with banners displayed and music sounding, of a triumphal procession. . . . Never before did the

[6] Hill, vol. III, p. 325 (Clive's Evidence before the Parliamentary Committee).
[7] Orme, *History of Indostan,* vol. II, p. 182.

English nation at one time obtain such a prize in solid money.[8]

Let there be no misunderstanding that the Nawab was still left with a considerable amount of money in his treasury. A substantial part of it was paid, at the same time, to the members of the select committee, according to Watts' clandestine agreement with Mir Jafar before Plassey was staged. (This agreement did not form part of the Treaty, and the secret was kept confined to the members of the committee. But since the money had eventually got to be sent to England by individual beneficiaries—and the fact was bound to become known—Clive threw out a hint in his letter dated 6 August 1757, to the secret committee of the Company in London, saying: 'The Nawab's generosity has enabled me to live with satisfaction in England.' As time passed, jealousies of those not quite friendly to Clive developed into open aspersions, both in England and India, and Clive's conduct was closely examined by the 1772 Parliamentary Committee. Exactly what amounts were received by Clive and others remains a secret till this day. According to 'an account of such sums as have been proved or acknowledged before the committee'—the parliamentary committee—sixteen leading Englishmen of Fort William received in 1757 and in subsequent years cash amounts totalling Rs. 58,70,000, of which Clive alone received Rs. 20,80,000 and Watts Rs. 10,40,000. Watson, being a servant of the King of England, and not of the Company, was not considered eligible to a share, and was, according to the evidence tendered before the Parliamentary Committee, left aggrieved. It will be absurd to believe that these huge amounts, which depleted the Nawab's treasury, were given to the English leaders as a voluntary 'present', as Clive stated in his evidence before the committee. Sometime later, Clive deprived the Nawab, again by means of a voluntary 'present', of the three lakhs of rupees of annual revenue of the lands (24 parganas) whose zamindari rights were transferred to the Company under the ninth article of the treaty. The lands were made, under a 'gift', a personal *jagir* of Clive, as a consequence of which the Company paid the revenues to him, and not into the Nawab's treasury.

After discharging only partly the obligations imposed on him by the Treaty and after making staggering amounts of 'presents' to the leading servants of the Company, Mir Jafar had not much money left, and found himself incapacitated to carry on his government and maintain an army. The suddenness and peculiarity

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 187-8.

of the political change had thrown a number of the Nawab's dependencies into a state of anarchy, and revenues had virtually stopped flowing into the treasury. Mir Jafar had expected that the heavy amounts he had paid to the English 'would lead to a relaxation of their demands on account of the Company'. But, on the contrary, he was sternly required to pay not only the amounts stipulated in the Treaty, but also unstipulated demands on account of Clive's army. In July (1757), most of the accumulated wealth in the treasury had been poured into the coffers of the Company and into the pockets of some individual Englishmen; and yet, knowing very well that the treasury was not being replenished by fresh receipts, Clive began to send strong demand notes to the Nawab and his Prime Minister, Durlabh Ram. And the poor Nawab had no alternative but to sue for mercy in a pathetic letter (without date, received by Clive on 20 September 1757):

> I regard you as my son. You have strongly represented to me the absolute necessity of fully discharging the twenty-five lack of rupees to be paid to the land and sea forces. It gives me great concern that I have it not in my power to comply with your demands after having received so many favours from you and being under such obligations to you. When the Treaty was made and the articles relating to the donations agreed on, I then told Mr. Watts I was unacquainted with the amount of treasure that might be in the Treasury. What is not in my power to do cannot be expected from me, so it is no fault of mine. I must therefore esteem it a misfortune unavoidable, and am of opinion you gentlemen on such an occasion will not think it at all eligible I should be distressed. My engagements I still firmly adhere to and will perform to the utmost of my power.[9]

In the same letter Mir Jafar said: 'My own army are in arrears, the chout to be paid to the Mahrattas, and a present to the King with the Pishcash must be sent wihout delay.' These two were other heavy demands which, his depleted treasury being unable to meet, naturally caused him anxiety.

But the appeal for mercy had no effect, and Clive addressed strong notes to the Nawab and Durlabh Ram demanding the maintenance of Rs. 100,000 per mensem for his army, and the

[9] *Bengal & Madras Papers,* vol. II (Col. Clive's Correspondence. No. 216.)

Nawab, helpless like a bird in the fowler's hand, paid several lakhs of rupees. Every month that passed added to the arrears, and the Nawab could not keep pace with the time. He presided over a disgruntled army and disaffected feudal lords. In the political situation, as it developed after the successful conclusion of the conspiracy, the Nawab was fiinding himself a victim of the English, and the English were ascending to supremacy. Key positions in the government were occupied by those (for example, Durlabh Ram and Ram Narain) who would have been disgraced and deprived of their jobs if English intervention had not asserted itself. Clive also exercised restraining authority even on rebellious elements. So long as internal instability and external danger of invasion lasted, Clive's dominating position was bound to continue. Should stability return, the first attempt of Mir Jafar, as it is of every victim, would be to break the shackles that bound him to Clive's obedience. Clive therefore decided to stay on with his force, in the neighbourhood of Murshidabad, until the collection of money promised in the treaty was made a certainty. The most certain way that suggested itself to him was to get the Nawab to surrender to the English his right of collection of the land revenues in some of his districts. Clive observes in his letter dated 23 December 1757 to the Select Committee:

> We have already had occasion to observe the difficulties attending every application for money to the Durbar, and I foresee they will increase as the Nabob grows stronger, and we become less necessary; therefore I have determined not to leave this ground till I procure sufficient assignments on the revenues of some country near Calcutta for the annual payment of the money still due by treaty; together with proper writings from the Zamindars of such country for the regular discharge of the same, which we may enforce if necessary.

Clive's demand was at once accommodated, and the Nawab issued orders assigning the revenues of Burdwan, Nadea, and Hugli to the Company. In the zamindari of these districts, the English now became the Nawab's collectors with the authority to appropriate his share to themselves until the treaty obligations had been fully discharged. Luke Scrafton was put in charge of the collections, and he started his work with despotic severity. Writing abount Nadea, in his letter dated 20 June 1758 to the Select Committee, he says: 'When it is considered that if from June to

November which includes the best months of the year the Government could collect only Rs. 2,31,457-15, I presume Your Honour, &c., will not think me very remiss in having collected Rs. 2,70,000 from December to May, of which months March, April and May produce very little.'[10] (He meant to say that the Nawab's Government, in the past, was able to collect in the best season much less than he had done in lean months.) But finding the severity he had already made use of inadequate, he endeavoured to excel it. He says in the same letter:

> I can only say I took every method that my little experience suggested to me. ... The Raja's son arrived here a few days ago. He declares and produces accounts to show the whole revenue of his country is six lacs. As father and son are both villains, I give no credit to their accounts, but finding that no severity that I could use could get any money from him, I have sent him to Roydullub there to show his accounts, and wrote him that the Rajah pleads his country has not produced more than what he has paid, therefore I expect he will pay the balance from the Nabob's treasury and also the 9 lacs for the ensuing year. It is possible that by threatening the Rajah with the loss of his cast and such corporal punishments as are in practice among those people, something more may be extorted from him. ... The chief cause of the balance is the Rajah's extravagance; it therefore appears to me as one necessary step to send a trusty person into his country to collect his revenues for him, to deprive the Rajah of all power in his country, allowing him only Rs. 10,000 per annum, or whatever Your Honour, &c., may think proper for his expenses, and keep the son in Calcutta as security for the father's good behaviour.

This is an example of how the English collected barely within two years from three districts the huge balance of the amounts stipulated in the treaty. The deteriorating condition of these districts made the Nawab anxious, and in the beginning of the summer of 1760, he demanded their restoration to him, and offered 'a security of jewels in their stead'[11] to discharge the balance of Rs. 20 lakhs. The English had to agree to it.

Severities apart, the above might be considered a fair satisfaction

[10] *Ibid.*, vol. III (Account of the Revolution in Bengal in the year 1957, p. 36).
[11] Vansittart, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

of an item of the unfair treaty. But the authorities of Fort William endeavoured to add, by means of bribes, to the provision of another item, and to reduce the scope of obligation it imposed on the Company. The item (Article Ninth) related to 'the land lying to the south of Calcutta as far as Culpee', which had been made the 'zemindaree of the English Company'. On 14 October 1758, the Fort William authorities decided ('at a committee' meeting) to appoint an Indian, named Kashinath, to assist Warren Hastings, the Company's agent at Murad Bagh and in charge of land affairs, and asked him to carry out the above intention by whatever means. The instructions issued to him said:

> Though our treaty with the Nabob expresses from Calcutta southward to Culpee, yet the above mentioned limits to the north and north-east may nevertheless be explained to be within the bounds prescribed by the said treaty as being within the purgannah of Calcutta. Our meaning is not that you should insist on this in behalf of the Hon'ble Company as what they have a right to, but if the Nabob can be made sensible, it will be no loss to him, as we shall pay him the usual rents; and if he is willing to yield it up to the Hon'ble Company, it will be a very advantageous acquisition. To effect this you are to try every method to gain those to your interest that have influence at the Darbar, and if presents are found necessary to win them to you, we permit you to go as far as a year's revenue of the said lands.[12]

Article Ninth required the Company to pay 'the revenues' on account of the lands 'south of Calcutta' 'in the same manner' as 'other zemindars' paid, but the instructions issued to Kashinath hit upon a way by which a reduction could be made. Kashinath was to interpret the term 'revenue' as the actual amount payable to the Mughal Emperor, exclusive of the additions made by the provincial government. The revenues as paid by 'other zemindars' included the additions, and therefore the interpretation was mischievous, and was expected to be carried through firstly by the Company's dominating influence and secondly by bribing subordinate officials, with whom Kashinath was asked to 'adjust'. Kashinath was finally told: 'Always reflect on the great reputation you will acquire by a prudent management of this important affair, and be assured of a suitable reward.' The Company never paid full amounts of the revenue even according to Fort William's interpretation, and

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

when the Nawab, hard-pressed for money demanded a loan of rupees two lakhs on the security of the revenues payable by the Company, he never received a favourable response. A year later, in the middle of 1759, the Nawab was deprived even of the reduced revenues, which became Clive's personal money by virtue of the lands having been made the Colonel's *jagir*, which he described in his cross-examination before the Parliamentary Committe (1772) as the Nawab's voluntary 'gift' to him! Would any sensible man believe that a famished government entreating for loans would willingly deprive itself of a source of considerable revenue? The same government, a few months before, was reluctant even to make a reduction in the revenue; a proceeding of Fort William itself records: ' ... the Nawab seems to start many difficulties in regard to the lands'.[13]

The most amusing thing in the land transaction is the pretension which secured the *jagir*. On 3 April 1759, the Mughal Prince, Ali Gauhar, who was styled as the Prince of Bengal in the Imperial Durbar, invaded Patna with a view to assuming the charge of the three provinces. The invasion had been anticipated, and Clive was on his march towards Patna, when a clash took place between the armies of the prince and Ram Narain, the administrator of Bihar. The invaders were worsted and put to flight. Clive was yet a few miles from Patna, but he appropriated the victory to himself, saying that it was the fear of his advancing force that put the prince to flight. The event is recorded thus in the Fort William proceedings dated 17 April: 'Received a letter from Colonel Clive, dated from Camp near Bar [Bihar] the 4th April, informing us that Ramnarain, animated by our advancing to his assistance, has exerted himself greatly beyond all expectation in the defence of the city against the repeated attacks of the Shahzadah [Prince], who made a furious assault on the 3rd.'[14] (The significance of the words 'beyond all expectation', in this context, is that on the advice from Mir Jafar's son an impression had prevailed that Ram Narain had 'gone over to the Shahzadah'.[15] The account of the event, as sent by Fort William to Fort Saint George, was further gravitated towards Clive; it was entered as follows in the latter's minute book:

From Bengal we have the pleasure to learn by our last advices

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 5 (extract from the proceedings of the Committee for the Administration of Bengal,—Fort William Proceedings dated 1 January 1759.)

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 13, (Proceedings dated 17 April).

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 13, (Proceedings dated 1 April).

dated about the middle of April, that the trouble which threatened that province by the approach of the Mogul's Son was stifled in their infancy by Col. Clive's timely march towards Patna. The certainty of being thus supported, encouraged the Nabob of Patna to resist all the attacks of the Mogul's Son, who after wasting a great part of his Force in fruitless attempts upon that place, did not care to wait the arrival of the Colonel, but retired to the northward upon hearing he was within two days' march.[16]

The suggestion is preposterous because the prince knew it well that Clive, as he had himself made it known, had established a new Nawab in the government of Bengal. Clive became the hero of the Patna battle also, and managed to get a fresh reward from the Nawab in the shape of the *jagir*.

Mir Jafar had liberally carried out all the Articles of the treaty, trascending the provisions to the advantage of the English and to considerable disadvantage to himself, his government and his people. The circular order he issued on 15 July 1757, immediately after the assumption of the Nawabship, not only restored custom exemption, but, in effect, restrained his officers from preventing abuse of the privilege. The order said:

To all Governments, Mutsaddies, present or future, all Naibs, Phowsdars, Zamindars, Chowdarees, Canoongoes, &c., servants of the Government in the provinces of Bengal, Behar and Orissa,—Know that by the royal phirmaund and husbulhookums, the English Company are pardoned (maaf) exempt from all duties. Therefore I write whatever goods the Company's gomastas may bring or carry to or from their Factories, you shall neither ask nor receive any sum, however trifling, for the same; know they have full power to buy and sell; you are by no means to oppose it. You are not to require from the Company's gomastahs, the Settee Mangan or any other of the zemindars' impositions. The Company's gomastahs shall buy and sell the Company's goods without the intervention of Delols; unless the gomastahs are satisfied to employ them. You are to assist them on all occasions wherever they buy or sell. Whoever acts contrary to these orders, the English have full power to punish. If any of the Company's goods are stolen, you are to recover the very effects stolen, or make good their account. Any merchants or

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 2, (Fort Saint George Proceedings dated 28 June 1759).

others on whom the Company have any lawful demands, you are to see that the same be paid to their gomastahs; take care that no one wrong or oppress the Company's gomastahs. You are not to require or stop the Company's boats on pretence of the katbarry or other duties on boats, whether they be the Company's own boats or boats hired by their gomastahs. You are to give credit to all the copies of all the sunnuds to the Company under the Kazie's seal without requiring the original. Any of the Company's debtors running from them, you are not to give them protection or plead for them, but are to deliver them up to the Company's gomastahs. The Phousdary Khurcha, &c., impositions of the Phousdars which are forbid by the King, you shall not demand of the English, their gomastahs or inhabitants. Whenever the English Company desire to settle a new Factory besides those they are already possessed of in the provinces of Bengal, Behar and Orixa, you are to give them 40 begas of the King's land. If any of the English ships are driven by bad weather or wrecked in any of the ports or other places, you are to assist them all in your power, and see that the goods are restored to the Company, and you are not to require the Khurcha, &c., which the King has forbid.

A mint is established in Calcutta, coin siccas and gold mohurs of equal weight and fineness with the siccas and gold mohurs of Muxadabad, they shall pass in the King's treasury.

All that I have wrote above must be done; do as I have wrote, nor ask a new sunnud every year. The 27th of the moon Showal and 4th of the King's reign, being the 15th of the month of July 1757.[17]

This order was issued in accordance with Article One of the treaty, which bound Mir Jafar to the Company's treaty with Siraj-ud-daula (February 1757), but a comparison of the order with the relevant Article (Article Two) of that treaty and the several new obligations now imposed on the government, will show that the English, at whose dictation the order was written out, far exceeded the limits of the provision.

More demands—quite heavy ones—were yet to be made on the Nawab. Before describing how his humble unwillingness to concede them occasioned the loss of his Nawabship, we should meet Henry Vansittart, who showed Mir Jafar the exit. After

[17] *Ibid.*, (Bengal Public Consultations, 1758, p. 2).

the middle of June 1758, Fort William received an order (dated 13 November 1757) from the Court of Directors, removing Roger Drake from the office of the presidentship and appointing a governing council of ten, the four senior members of which were to preside alternately, each for four months. Strangely enough, Clive was not included in the new governing body. For the first four months of rotation, Watts was chosen as president, but he, as well as other members of the council considered the new arrangement (of rotating presidentship) prejudicial to the interest of the Company. Their argument was: 'Had our Hon'ble employers been apprised of the present state of their affairs in this kingdom, they would have placed the Presidentship in some one person as the easiest and clearest method of conducting their concerns, as well as preserving and maintaining the weight and influence the late happy revolution has given us with the Subah of these provinces.'[18] And the council unanimously elected Clive as their permanent president. They said 'his eminent services, abilities and merit, together with his superior weight and influence with the present Subah and his officers, are motives which have great force with them on this occasion, and all concur in pointing out Colonel Clive as the person best able to render our Hon'ble employers the necessary service at this juncture'.[19] Clive accepted the offer, giving expression to the mental injury the Court of Directors' omission had caused him: 'I think I have cause to be dissatisfied with the Court of Directors for laying me aside in their new form of government without any reason assigned.'[20] Clive was in fact expecting a bigger prize, for which he set influences at work in London, as is evident from the following extract from the letter he wrote to his father after the conclusion of the treaty with Siraj-ud-daula:

> As this success has probably saved the Company, this is a proper time to push my interest. I have written to my Lord Chancellor, the Archbishop, Mr. Fox, and my Lord Barrington, Secretary at War, to desire their interest. I have likewise wrote to Messrs. Mabbot, Drake and Payne. I am desirous of being appointed Governor-General of India if such an appointment should be necessary. I have opened myself a little to Mr. Mabbot; however I would have you manage this affair with great prudence and discretion and not mention the word Governor-General without you find it hinted at by other hands. Consult Mr. Belchier

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 30. [19] *Ibid.* [20] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

and don't make the contents of this letter known to anyone else but the Judge[21] and Mr. King.[22]

Clive's election to the governorship was subsequently confirmed by the Court of Directors, and he postponed his intended trip by 'fourteen or fifteen months', 'to enjoy', as he himself says 'the fruits of war'.

Clive was now virtually Nawab of Bengal, and Mir Jafar, a miserable creature, was in the midst of conspiracies, the principal conspirators being Durlabh Ram, the chief minister, and Ram Narain, the deputy Nawab at Patna. Before the change in the government, brought about by Plassey, Durlabh Ram ranked with Mir Jafar, and being a co-conspirator, he thought he was 'not sufficiently rewarded'.[23] 'And Colonel Clive, judging it necessary to strengthen himself against Meer Jaffier',[24] 'entered into strict engagements, with Roydoulub, to protect him as far as life and honour, provided he attempted nothing against Meer Jaffier's person, or government'.[25] But 'the close connection which appeared between' the English and Durlabh Ram, 'widened the breach between' the Nawab and Durlabh Ram, 'till mutual distrust increased to that pitch, that each began to strengthen his party. Roydoulub endeavoured to gain the officers of the army to him; and Meer Jaffier dismissed from his court, all those who had shewed too great an attachment to a Minister he had made too powerful.'[26] The conspirators included Khwaja Hadi and Kazim Ali Khan, 'and most of the general officers,' who 'entered into a written agreement to support each other'.[27] These officers 'frequently sounded Col. Clive, and endeavoured, by every artifice and stratagem, to set him at open variance with Meer Jaffier, while their party at Court, acted the same part with Meer Jaffier, by continually insinuating to him, that the Colonel was won over by Roydoulub and Ramnarain, and would certainly attempt his life'.[28] Ram Narain, who had been faithful to Siraj-ud-daula, believed that his new master (Mir Jafar) 'would not confirm him'[29] as deputy at Bihar. Bihar then was faced with the threat of a rebellion, and Mir Jafar wished to replace Ram Narain by his own brother.

[21] 'Probably refers to Lord Hardwicks.'
[22] Hill, vol. II, p. 243, (letter dated 23 February 1757).
[23] Henry Vansittart, *A Letter to the Proprietors of East-India Stock*, p. 60.
[24] Scrafton's Pamphlet censuring Vansittart's Conduct, p. 105.
[25] *Ibid.* [26] *Ibid.* [27] *Ibid.*, p. 111. [28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

But Ram Narain enjoyed the confidence of the English, and Clive and the rest of the committee of Fort William sent 'a letter of instructions . . . to Colonel Caillaud . . . to protect Ram Narain, in case of the Nabob's making any attempt against his person or honour'.[30] Later, Ram Narain was suspected of 'conspiring with' the Mughal Prince, Ali Gauhar, and Clive 'advised Meer Jaffier to displace him from his government of Patna'.[31] But for some 'unknown motives' Mir Jafar changed his mind, and allowed Ram Narain to continue in his office. Only the fear of a worse situation resulting from the change the Nawab proposed must have compelled him to tolerate Ram Narain, who 'remitted no money' to the government 'out of all the produce of the rents of the Patna Province; but on the contrary, demanded continual supplies from Moorshedabad, to pay the troops under his command; with which, he was always more ready to rebel against his master, than to oppose his enemies'.[32] But the Nawab dismissed Durlabh Ram, who was the central figure of conspiracy, and who had 'dissipated and appropriated to himself, a vast sum of the publick treasure'.[33] He enjoyed British protection, and was 'escorted to a safe retreat in Calcutta'.[34] Mir Jafar was 'subjected to continual insults from those who depended on the Company's protection . . . by the protection given to Ramnarain, Roydoulub, and Omarbeg, he had been spoiled of vast sums'.[35] The last named (Omar Beg) had been appointed administrator of Hugli, 'and finding more advantage in the protection of the English, than in preserving his fidelity to his master, and rendering a just account of his administration, he dissipated, or appropriated to his own use, a large sum of the publick money'.[36] And when he was to be called by the Nawab to render his account, he was given a passage in an English ship and was helped to abscond to Basra. The wretched Nawab was unable to make regular payment to his army—an army which was to be called upon to fight the invading Mughal Prince. According to a letter Hastings, then English Resident at the Nawab's Court at Murshidabad, wrote to Clive, 'dissensions' had grown between 'the Nawab and his army', 'the greatest part' of which 'would assuredly quit' him 'as soon as he took the field'.[37] Fortunately for the Nawab, when the Shahzada actually appeared, the fighting was done by Ram Narain's force, and not by the Nawab's.

[30] Vansittart, *Ibid.*, p. 70. [31] *Ibid.*, p. 62. [32] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 61. [34] *Ibid.* [35] *Ibid.*, p. 67. [36] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[37] Quoted in Sir John Malcolm, *Life of Lord Clive*, p. 395.

On the other hand, some leading men of Fort William suspected the Nawab's son of hatching anti-English designs. According to Holwel, 'a party was raised at the Durbar, headed by the Nawab's son, Miran, and Raja Rajebullab,[38] who were daily planning schemes to shake off their dependence on the English, and continally urging to the Nawab, that until this was effected his government was a name only.'[39] The English also suspected the Nawab of having entered into a conspiracy with the Dutch Company, with a view to extirpating with their assistance the dominant and intolerable English influence, the cause of suspicion being the reported despatch of Dutch troops from Batavia, and later, the actual arrival of the armament. Contemporary records, however, do not adduce any positive evidence to support the suspicion entertained by men like Holwell. When the fighting took place between the Dutch and the English, not one soldier of the Nawab fought for the former. The Dutch were defeated and humbled. But the English suspicion of the Durbar, especially of Miran, was deepening, particularly on account of Miran's behavior, which was discordant with their expectation. It was Miran who got Raj Ballabh appointed as Prime Minister in place of Durlabh Ram. Clive considered Miran so unworthy 'as to make it almost unsafe trusting him with the succession'[40] (after the death of the Nawab).

Between Prince Ali Gauhar's invasion in April 1759 and the assumption of Fort William's Governship by Vansittart in July 1760, political situation in Bengal, in fact in the whole of India, further deteriorated. Ali Gauhar had been making preparations for a fresh invasion of Bihar, and did actually launch it in the beginning of 1760, to be defeated again by the indigenous and English forces. He had been declared a rebel by the Mughal Prime Minister, Ghazi-ud-din, at the instance of the Delhi Emperor even at the time of his first invasion. After his first retreat (April 1759), he contacted Clive through a letter, 'which', according to Fort William proceedings dated 4 May 1759, 'the Colonel conjectures to be a contrivance to sow dissension between himself and Nawab, or else as an introduction to his throwing himself upon him for protection'.[41] The estrangement between the Mughal Court

[38] Raj Ballabh had been appointed in place of Durlabh Ram.
[39] Vansittart, *Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal,* p. 48 (from the Memorial prepared by Holwell as acting Governor of Fort William and delivered to the Select Committee upon the arrival of Vansittart).
[40] Quoted in Col. G. B. Malleson, *Life of Warren Hastings,* p. 44.
[41] *Bengal & Madras Papers,* vol. III. (Extracts from the Proceedings of the Committee appointed for the Administration of Bengal, p. 15).

and the prince however stirred up a thought of a profitable alliance with the prince, but it was abandoned as impracticable in the then circumstances of the Company. The proceedings further said: 'Had we been furnished with a force from home as we had a right to expect, a glorious opportunity now presented itself to make ourselves great in India; but circumstanced as we are he thinks it would be imprudent to give umbrage to the Vizier by giving any encouragement to the Shahzada.' The meaning is obvious that Clive would have entered into an alliance with the invading prince in order to extend the English right up the north-western border of Oudh; what restrained him was the inadequacy of the English force. At the time of his second invasion, the prince caused the English to be informed that Mir Jafar had opened negotiations for a separate treaty. Even the 'original' letter supposed to be Mir Jafar's was sent to the English. The letter must have been a forged one, but it left no suspicion in the mind of the acting governor, Holwell, who says that 'the whole tenor of the Nabob's conduct most exactly tallies with the terms of the letter'.[42]

The Mughal Prince had returned, but the fear of his invading Bihar remained, and indeed he did so. How to maintain their supremacy in Bengal was now the problem before the English. Although Miran sometimes caused them uneasiness, they desired Mir Jafar's continuance in the government which they had made subservient to their will and were seriously exerting themselves to frustrate the design of the Mughal Prince or any other power to supplant the present rule. Since the control of the Company's affairs passed into the hands of Clive, the emphasis in English ambition had shifted from making commercial gains to acquiring political influence. They made the defence of Bengal their concern, took stock of the political situation, and formulated plans to meet future dangers. Several local chiefs, according to the information the English received from their informers, had decided to go over to and help the Mughal Prince, in his entry into Bengal at the time of his next invasion. The most powerful of them was Asad Zamin Khan, the chief of Birbhum, whose forces had been augmented by those of his uncle Kamgar Khan. Another was the chief of Purnea, Kadeem Husain Khan, who had just then been 'dispossessed of his government' and 'driven out of the country'. According to Holwell's Memorial (cited above), Kadeem Husain Khan had managed to

[42] Vansittart, *Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal* (From the Memorial prepared by Holwell), p. 60.

carry with him 'all his treasure and valuable effects' and 'will easily join the prince with the essentials of war'. As if to complicate the political situation further, 'the Marathas entered the province from the southward, and penetrated into the Burdwan country'. Though they were repulsed by the combined forces of the Nawab and the English, the former being commanded by Miran and the latter by Major Caillaud, their adventure aggravated the fear about the future. In the actions against the prince, the Marathas, and the rebellious chiefs of Bengal, the Engilish got the impression that the Nawab and his son, particularly the latter, were not always prepared to submit to English commands. Says Holwell in his Memorial:

> ... the young Nabob (Miran) refused to join the major, in the immediate pursuit of the Shahzada when routed near Patna ... the old Nabob refused to comply with the major's request and demand, to cross his horse over the Burdwan river, and attack the prince when united with Shubut, &c.; ... in the late pursuit of Cuddeem Hosein Cawn, the young Nabob refused to lead or detach his horse to the major's assistance, by which a general action might have been brought on: but, on the contrary, he kept encamped two or three miles in the major's rear, as if his intentions were to leave our troops, without horse, a sacrifice to the enemy.

Miran had already antagonised the English by the removal of Durlabh Ram and some other officers, 'who', says Holwell, 'were attached to the English'. Holwell goes on to say: 'Roydoolub, his son, and four brothers were proscribed, on no other account, but that of the various informations he gave us, and his firm attachment; this family would have fallen a sacrifice, had they not been rescued out of the Nabob's hands by force of arms.'

On 3 July Miran 'was killed by lightening'. The death was suspected to have been designed and carried out by the English.

Miran's death came as a relief to the English, and Holwell suggested that it could be 'made a proper use of'. Hope was entertained that Mir Jafar would now be more amenable to the dictation of the English, but eyes were at the same time cast on alternatives should he resist their future demands for establishing their military supremacy. Holwell had been looking for an opportunity to appoint a deputy in the government who should reduce the Nawab to the position of superannuated retirement (he was about sixty years

of age) and assume effective control to be exercised according to wishes of the English. Therefore after the death of Miran, they raised the question of succession and thought of two persons, Miran's infant son and Mir Kasim Ali Khan, the Nawab's son-in-Law, believing that any of them would suit them. Colonel Caillaud was 'in favor of' the Nawab's 'infant grandson', and had represented to him 'that the troops at Patna insisted on his being named to the vacant offices and that Raja Rajebullub, the late Dewan to the Nabob's deceased son, should have the management of them during his minority.'[43] The English had, in the meantime, won over Raj Ballabh to their side. Mir Kasim had made positive indication of his inclination towards the English, and was more acceptable to them. He was in possession of immense wealth, and Mir Jafar was now a pauper. 'More than once', says Vansittart, troops whose pay had been in arrears, 'surrounded the Palace', and it was Mir Kasim who saved the situation from taking an ugly shape 'by an immediate payment of three lacks [lakhs] of rupees to his (the Nawab's) troops, and becoming a security for their arrears at the time of their tumultuously surrounding the palace; and this he did, upon promise of being appointed to the vacant offices of his deceased son, and declared his successor'.

The Nawab had no confidence left in the English. His inner conflict is described thus by Vansittart:

> The Nabob seemingly acquiesced in both recommendations, but continued wavering in his choice, in such a manner, as shewed, that the increase of the English influence was the event that he most dreaded in the appointment of either. This is the only clue which can lead to the motives of the many opposite resolutions which were taken up by the Nabob, upon this affair, in the small space of time in which it was suspended. His inclinations first led him to accept the advice offered him by Colonel Caillaud, in favour of his grandson; but when that advice was urged in a more pressing and peremptory stile, and Rajebullub, by his emissaries and friends at the Durbar, too sollicitously labored to bring about the same design, the Nabob became jealous of his growing power, and suddenly declared his resolution to support Meer Cossim in his pretensions, as will appear by the letter he wrote Mr. Holwell and Colonel Caillaud upon this subject. On the other hand, the Nabob perceiving that Meer Cossim was warmly supported by Mr. Holwell, appears

[43] Vansittart, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

to have formed the wild scheme of shaking off both, by throwing all the chief offices of the government into the hands of a stranger, named Mirza Daood, who had for some years enjoyed the protection of this court in the character of a prince of the royal blood of Persia.[44]

Such, in brief, was the state of affairs in Bengal, when Vansittart took over the presidency from the temporary president, Holwell, in July 1760. Three years had elapsed since the Mir Jafar-English treaty, which poured into British coffers immense wealth. Much of it had been sent 'home' and also distributed to the settlements at Madras and Bombay, the former being engaged in English-French-indigenous powers contests. Madras and Bombay were still depending 'on supplies from Bengal'.[45] Never was money flowing into British treasury so handsomely as it did during the past three years, and yet, says Vansittart, 'we were absolutely left without any resources'.[46] 'A little after' his arrival in Bengal, Vansittart asked the Nawab for 'the grant of the Chittagong provinces, in farm to the Company', but 'he positively refused to admit'[47] the proposal. The example of the lands south of Calcutta, which under the treaty were farmed to the Company, and which later became, under duress, the *jagir* of Clive, was yet fresh in the Nawab's mind, and any ruler worth the name and in his position, would have avoided as far as possible to entertain such a proposal. The English had, however, made up their mind to have as much of further territory as would yield an annual revenue of fifty lakhs of rupees, and even contemplated of opening negotiations for an alliance with the Mughal Prince.[48] What policy Fort William should pursue in dealing with the Nawab in the context of their contemplated negotiations with the prince and also with Mir Kasim, who possessed the capacity to satisfy the Company's demands for money, was indicated by the decisions of the Select Committee at a meeting held on 15 September 1760:

The great objects of our deliberation are, first, the securing a fund of money for the present and future exigencies of this settlement, as well as the other two presidencies, no money being expected from Europe; and, secondly, the putting an end to the disturbances fomented and kept up by the Shahzada in several

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42. [45] *Ibid.*, p. 38. [46] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 65 (Vansittart's letter dated 4 August 1760, to Caillaud).

parts of these provinces, that the whole may be united under the Nabob, and be put under the more immediate influence of the Company.

The committee, therefore,

resolved unanimously, that the entering into an alliance with the Shahzada, is a necessary and expedient measure. The President is accordingly desired to press Cossim Alee Cawn on the subject of our expences, and our great distress for money; so as to draw from him some proposal of means for removing those difficulties, by which possibly we may be able to form a judgment, whether he might not be brought to join in this negotiation, and in procuring the Nawab's consent.[49]

With this resolution of the Committee began the proceedings which eventually led to the liquidation of the Nawab and emergence of another puppet, Mir Kasim.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 94-5.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Deposition of Mir Jafar : Mir Kasim as New Nawab

MIR KASIM was Mir Jafar's son-in-law, and as the latter had done three years ago, he entered into a conspiracy with the English to ensure his claim to the Nawabship, and acquire all powers of that office at once. He had been sent to Fort William by Mir Jafar, on an invitation from there which was made the pretext of an official business. When Mir Kasim's mind had been psychologically prepared, Vansittart, with the characteristic diplomacy of his predecessors—Clive and Holwell—threw out broad hints of Fort William Council's latest scheme. The select committee, in its minutes dated 16 September 1760, recorded Mir Kasim's reaction thus:

> Cossim Allee Cawn [Mir Kasim] replied, that he has it not at present in his power to provide in a proper manner for the supply of the Company; that if we could undertake to give him the general management of the country, by taking it out of the hands of those who are now entrusted with it by the Nabob, he would then make such assignments in favor of the Company, as should be perfectly to our satisfaction. At the same time he insinuated, that this would undoubtedly meet with opposition at Moorshedabad, and at first prove very disagreeable to the Nabob himself, for which reason it would be quite necessary to have a force at hand to support him, by which, being enabled to over-rule the present evil counsellors of the Nabob, he could answer for bringing the Nabob himself into such terms as should be agreed on here.[1]

Then followed, as Vansittart says, 'many conferences with Meer Cossim', leading to the conclusion of a secret treaty with him; history was repeating itself—sixteen months before a similar treaty was secretly concluded with Mir Jafar, and was to be implemented

[1] Vansittart, *Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal,* p. 98.

on the liquidation of Siraj-ud-daula. The terms of the treaty proposed by the English and signed by Mir Kasim on 27 September were:

First. Nabob Meer Mahomed Jaffier Cawn shall continue in the possession of his dignities, and all affairs be transacted in his name, and suitable income shall be allowed for his expences.

Second. The Neabut (deputy government) of the Soubadarree of Bengal, Azimabad, and Orissa, &c., shall of conferred by his Excellency the Nabob on Meer Mahomed Cossim Cawn. He shall be vested with the administration of all the affairs of the provinces, and after his Excellency he shall succeed to the government.

Third. Betwixt us and Meer Mahomed Cossim Cawn, a firm friendship and union is established. His enemies are our enemies, and his friends are our friends.

Fourth. The Europeans and seepoys of the English army shall be ready to assist the Nabob Meer Mahomed Cossim Cawn in the management of all affairs, and in all affairs dependent on him, they shall exert themselves to the utmost of their abilities.

Fifth. For all charges of the Company, and of the said army, and provisions for the field, &c., the lands of Burdwan, Midnapoor, and Chittagong, shall be assigned, and sunnuds for that purpose shall be written and granted. The Company is to stand to all losses, and receive all the profits of these three countries; and we will demand no more than the three assignments aforesaid.

Sixth. One half of the Chunam produced at Silhet for three years, shall be purchased by the Gomastahs of the Company, from the people of the government, at the customary rate of that place. The tenants and inhabitants of that place shall receive no injury.

Seventh. The balance of the former tuncaws shall be paid according to the Kistbundee agreed upon with the Royroyan. The jewels, which have been pledged, shall be received back again.

Eighth. We will not allow the tenants of the Sircar to settle in the lands of the English Company. Neither shall the tenants of the Company be allowed to settle in the lands of the Sircar.

Ninth. We will give no protection to the dependants of the Sircar, in the lands or factories of the Company, neither shall any protection be given to the dependants of the Company, in

the lands of the Sircar; and whoever shall fly to either party for refuge shall be given up.

TENTH. The measures for war or peace with the Shahzada, and raising supplies of money, and the concluding both these points, shall be weighed in the scale of reason, and whatever is judged expedient shall be put in execution; and it shall be so contrived by our joint counsels, that he be removed from this country, nor suffered to get any footing in it. Whether there be peace with the Shahzada or not, our agreement with Meer Mahomed Cossim Cawn, we will, by the grace of God, inviolably observe, as long as the English Company's factories continue in the country.[2]

The merciful treatment provided in the treaty for Mir Jafar, seemingly making a difference between the present attitude of the English and the one they adopted at the time of concluding a treaty with him, was due to the difference in the Company's own position, which was of supremacy now, and not of subordination as it was then. Mir Jafar was to be made to agree to the arrangement with Mir Kasim by persuasion, and in the event of his not responding to this method, by force. The matter was to be pushed up with all possible expeditiousness; the circumstance which might have complicated it, had it been delayed, was this: Rai Durlabh had, at the instance of the English, opened correspondence with the Mughal Prince; the select committee believed that 'within fifteen or twenty days from this time, something of it will transpire', and apprehended that the news about it would 'spread to Moorshedabad'. The committee feared: 'It is not to be doubted, but that the Nabob will be extremely alarmed at the first news of it, and that those who now rule him, will use their influence to encrease his fears and suspicions, and to make him as averse as possible to acquiesce in the measures we propose to adopt, and to which Cossim Allee Cawn has acceded.'[3] The committee, therefore, decided to have a sizeable force in readiness on the outskirts of the Nawab's capital, and gave Vansittart and Caillaud the following instruction:

It will be necessary to have persons commissioned with full powers from hence, and that they be such, as will have weight enough on the one part to keep Cossim Allee Cawn firm to the agreements he has entered into; and, on the other, to support

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 101-4. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

him so strongly, as to enable him to over-rule the Nabob, and his present advisers.

This entire confidence we place in you, impowering you to act according to your own discretion in all circumstances that may occur; and the better to enable you to accomplish our intentions, and prevent any disturbance, we have thought proper to make a detachment of two compleat companies of military, a company of artillery, with four pieces of cannon, and captain Tabby's battalion of seepoys, who are to act under your orders.[4]

Lest the Nawab should entertain any misgiving from the movement of the British force, an excuse was made to beguile him. Says the committee in the instruction: 'This detachment is represented to the Nabob, as designed to reinforce the army at Patna, but it is not our intention that they shall proceed further than Cossimbuzar.' (A British force had been staying on at Patna to assist Ram Narain to meet the anticipated attacks by the Mughal Prince.)

At this time, when the Nawab was to be confronted with the resolve of the English, his army was in defiant mood. Hastings, the English Resident at the Nawab's Court, describes it thus, in his letter dated 18 July to the select committee: the army 'encompassed' the Nawab's 'palace on the 14th, in a clamorous manner, but proceeded no further than to insult the treasurer and other muttaseddees, whom they pulled out of their pallanquins, and treated with other indignities. The same disorders continued the next day. On the 16th, they assembled in a large body, and stopped up the doors of the palace, suffering none to enter, or come out of it. Numbers mounted on every wall, not excepting the places held the most sacred, and loaded the Nabob with the most opprobrious language, threatening him with death, if their demands were not complied with. Such of his courtiers or attendants, as made their appearance, were assaulted by fragments broke off from the walls, by which several persons of distinction were wounded.'[5] (It was on this occasion that Mir Kasim, as already stated, made a payment of three lakhs of rupees to the clamourous army.)

The discontent in the Nawab's army at Patna manifested itself with similar exasperation. There the target of the army's fury was Raj Ballabh. Conveying the news of the affairs at Patna, Amyatt, the Company's representative at Patna, says (4 October) that 'the army . . . surrounded' Raj Ballabh's house, abused, and used him ill,

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 107-8. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

seized upon his boats, and 'for these three days past, there has been such a scene of confusion, I cannot express it; the seepoys are no ways under their commanders, and do almost what they please; and this scene is likely to continue, and probably may end in Rajebullub's being cut off, or some disaster upon the city; nothing but the fear of our army prevents it.'[6]

The state of anarchy into which Bengal had been thrown after and as the result of Plassey was continuing; Mir Jafar had become known as a helpless puppet, and not many farmers cared to deposit revenue dues into the state treasury. In the conditions of lawlessness, only a satisfied and regularly paid armed force could restore normalcy and stabilise the position of the new Nawab; but the accumulated treasure with which this could be brought about had all gone into the English coffers, and whatever collections were made were used up in discharging the balance of the treaty obligations and the obligations later imposed on the Nawab. The inevitable consequence was that while the Nawab was left without a dependable force, the Company had raised its regular armed force to 1,000 Europeans and 5,000 Indians, and, in order to augment it considerably so as to become the sole military power in the three provinces under the government of Bengal, was scheming to acquire an annual revenue yield of Rs. 50 lakhs.

To carry out this scheme—the resolve of Fort William cited above—Vansittart left for Murshidabad and met the Nawab on 14 October. He employed the excuse, to quote his own words, of 'the general weak condition of' the Nawab's 'government', with a view to justifying his demand. Vansittart says in his letter dated 15 October to the select committee: 'I described everything in the worst light I could, hoping, that by magnifying his difficulties, I might bring him more easily to consent to those measures, which we have resolved on.'[7] For five days Vansittart and his assistants carried on their persuasive conversation with the Nawab, telling him that his advisers were his enemies! Vansittart and Caillaud say in their letter dated 21 October to the select committee: 'We told him, the men with whom he had lately advised were not his friends, but his greatest enemies; that his returning again in the midst of them, would only be the means of augmenting his difficulties; that he had much better take the assistance of one from among his relations, on whose attachment and fidelity he might more safely rely.'[8] Amusingly enough, that pitiable ruler, replying to the latter suggestion, said 'that Cossim Allee Cawn was the most

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 112. [7] *Ibid.*, p. 111. [8] *Ibid.*, p. 116.

proper' person! But on further reflection, he appears to have become cautious. His reaction and uneasiness are thus graphically described in the above letter:

> Before Cossim Allee Cawn could arrive, the old Nabob was so extremely fatigued, and in such a state of anxiety, that we could not refuse his return home to take his rest; we were convinced, that it would be to no purpose to keep him, for such was the jeolousy he discovered, with regard to Cossim Allee Cawn, that we saw he never would consent, without some sort of force.[9]

On 19 October Vansittart and Caillaud again asked the Nawab 'to reflect upon' the proposals they had made. They 'heard nothing from him all day, but found by' their own 'intelligence, that he had been in council with his old advisers Koonram, Monelol, and Checon', who were not friendly to the English. 'We determined, therefore,' add the two English leaders, 'to act immediately upon the Nabob's fears.' The night of 19 October was chosen for the decisive action. 'There could not be a better opportunity,' they say, 'than the night of the 19th afforded, it being the conclusion of the Gentoo [Hindu] feast, when all the principal people of that cast, would be pretty well fatigued with their ceremonies.'[10] (Jafar's principal advisers at this time were Hindus.) How preparations were made for the last resort may again be told in Vansittart and Caillaud's own words:

> We determined, therefore, that Colonel Caillaud, with two companies of military, and six companies of seepoys, should cross the river between three and four in the morning; and having joined Cossim Allee Cawn and his people, march to the Nabob's palace, and surround it just at day break. . . . Measures were at the same time taken, for seizing the persons of Koonram, Monelol, and Checon, our intention being only to remove those three unworthy ministers, and place Cossim Allee Cawn in the full management of all the affairs.[11]

Then the plan was put into effect:

> The necessary preparations being accordingly made, with all the care and secrecy imaginable, the Colonel embarked with the troops, joined Cossim Allee Cawn without the least alarm, and

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 117. [10] *Ibid.*, p. 118. [11] *Ibid.*, pp. 118-9.

marched into the court-yard of the palace just at the proper instant. The gates of the inner court being shut, the Colonel formed his men without, and sent the Governor's letter to the Nabob.[12]

Caillaud had taken with him a letter, in the form of an ultimatum, from Vansittart, saying:

As long as these evil counsellors remain about your person, whatsoever I may represent to you for your prosperity and welfare, and the good of the country, will have no effect. The folly of those people will soon deprive you of your government, and prove the ruin likewise of the Company's affairs. I have judged it improper, that such evils and disgrace should be brought upon us for the sake of two or three men; for this reason, I have sent Colonel Caillaud with forces to wait upon you. When the said Colonel arrives, he will expel those bad counsellors, and place your affairs in a proper state; I will shortly follow. . . . I solemnly declare, that I have no other view but your good and welfare.[13]

Vansittart and Caillaud then proceed to narrate the rest of the story (in their letter dated 21 October):

The Nabob ... was at first in a great rage, and long threatened he would make what resistance he could, and take his fate. The Colonel forbore all hostilities, and several messages past by the means of Mr. Hastings, and Mr. Lushington. . . . The affairs remained in this doubtful state about two hours, when the Nabob, finding his persisting was to no purpose, sent a message to Cossim Allee Cawn, informing him, he was ready to send him the seals, and all the ensigns of dignity, and to order the Nobit to be struck up in his name, provided he would agree to take the whole charge of the government upon him, to discharge all the arrears due to the troops, to pay the usual revenues to the King, to save his life and honor, and to give him an allowance sufficient for his maintenance. All these conditions being agreed to, Cossim Allee Cawn was proclaimed, and the old Nabob came to the Colonel, declaring, that he depended on him for his life; and the troops then took possession of all the gates, and notice was sent to the Governor, who came immediately; and the old

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 118-20. [13] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Nabob met him in the gate-way, asking, if his person was safe, which seemed now to be all his concern. The Governor told him, not only his person was safe, but his government too, if he pleased, of which it never was intended to deprive him. The Nabob answered, that he had no more business at the city, that he should be in continual danger from Cossim Allee Cawn, and that if he was permitted to go and live in Calcutta, he should be extremely happy and contented; though we could not help lamenting his sudden fall, we were not sorry for this proposal, as the affairs will doubtless be better managed without him, and the advantages, stipulated for the Company, be obtained without the least difficulty or delay. Cossim Allee Cawn was accordingly seated on the musnud, and we paid him our congratulations in the usual form.[14]

On 22 October Mir Jafar was sent to Calcutta, 'escorted', (as Vansittart says in his letter of the same date to Ellis, who later officiated him as Governor), 'by a company of Europeans, and one of seepoys, under the command of captain Robertson'.[15] Mir Jafar dreaded his stay at Murshidabad. 'Would Mir Kasim', to quote Colonel Malleson, 'show him more mercy than he had shown to Sirajuddolah?'[16] The three years of Nawabship were the most distressing experience of his life. 'He could not but contrast his position, threatened by the men to whom he had sold his country, with that which he would have occupied if, at Plassey, he had been loyal to the boy relative who had, in the most touching terms, implored him to defend his turban.'[17] He was lodged in a house at Chitpur, about three miles from Calcutta.

Mir Kasim, unlike his predecessor, received an empty treasury. 'He found in the treasury,' says Vansittart (in his letter to the select committee dated 24 October), 'of ready money, only forty or fifty thousand rupees, and about the value of three lacks in gold and silver plate, which he ordered to be coined.'[17a] But, like his predecessor, he had got to pay heavy amounts of money to the English; and he did it from his personal wealth. Within two weeks of his assumption of the Nawabship, he paid ten lakhs of rupees for the English army—and he was made responsible for the payment of Rs. one lakh per mensem from 1 December 1759 to 30 September 1760; (there was no stipulation about it in the treaty he had signed).

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 120-1. [15] *Ibid.*, p. 136.
[16] Malleson, *The Decisive Battles of India*, pp. 131-2.
[17] *Ibid.* [17a] Vansittart, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

A sum of five lakhs of rupees was collected from him for the maintenance of 'the Nawab's army' at Patna.[18] According to the principal Article of the treaty, he transferred the three districts of Burdwan, Midnapur, and Chittagong, to the Company, and with this ceased his government's responsibility for the monthly payment of a lakh of rupees. Then, like Mir Jafar, he too had to fill private pockets of the leading Englishmen who had brought about the second 'successful revolution'. He was said to have 'promised verbally' the following amounts,[19] which he duly paid: to Vansittart —Rs. 500,000; to Holwell—Rs. 270,000; to Sumner—Rs. 255,000; to McGuire—Rs. 255,000; to Caillaud—Rs. 200,000; to Cuilling Smith—Rs. 134,000; to Captain Yorke—Rs. 134,000. All these amounts, totalling Rs. 17,48,000, with the addition of Rs. 15,00,000 accounted for above, come to Rs. 32,48,000. This, in addition to his treachery, was the price Mir Kasim had to pay to acquire the Nawabship.

The select committee had kept the plan, leading to the deposition of Mir Jafar, a carefully guarded secret even from the governing council of Fort William, but when it was accomplished and became known, several of the council considered the way the new 'revolution' had been brought about a disgrace to the English. Harry Verelst (later, Governor of Bengal) said: 'This sudden change must alarm every one, to find us so unexpectedly breaking through all our engagements, which were so publick, reputable, and to the honor of the nation.' He regretted that a treaty 'executed in the most solemn manner', between Mir Jafar and the English, and carried out with 'the most faithful adherence' should have been violated in the manner it was.[20] Another member, Smyth, also appended his signature to Verelest's minute of dissent. Amyatt, in his protest, 'to which Ellis and Smyth assented', said:

> Mr. Amyatt takes this opportunity to observe, that he is of opinion, the reasons given for deposing Jaffier Allee Cawn (for he can look upon it in no other light) are far from being sufficient to convict him of breach of faith; consequently, in the eyes of the world, the whole odium of such proceedings must retort upon ourselves.[21]

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 140.
[19] Malleson, *Life of Warren Hastings* (1894), p. 46.
[20] Vansittart, *op. cit.*, p. 148 (Verelst's minute of dissent dated 8 November, 1760).
[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 161-3.

Amyatt accused Vansittart of deciding upon the deposition of Mir Jafar at the time of entering into a secret treaty with Mir Kasim. He argues:

> The treaty subsisting between us and Cossim Allee Cawn plainly shews, that his sole aim at the time of entering into it was the Subahdarree of Bengal. Otherwise, how ridiculous was it for him to make a promise, of ceding certain countries to the Company, which his post of Dewan could never have given him the power of executing.[22]

Verelst also suggested:

> We have raised to the musnud ... (a person) whose character was never in any light conspicuous till lately; and whose treacherous behaviour to his father-in-law, leaves us very little hopes of his attachment to our interest; nor indeed can it be expected, that he will place any confidence in us, who have assisted to dethrone a man, we were bound to support by the most solemn ties, divine and human.[23]

Perhaps the outburst would have been severer had the protesting members known then that heavy amounts of money had been quietly pocketed by those who kept the plan of the contemplated 'revolution' from the governing board. In the light of the protests, it can be suggested that the considerable gains exacted from Mir Kasim for the Company were a safe cover for the individual gains, which partly, if not wholly, must have prompted the select committee, particularly, Vansittart, so that they might become as rich as Clive and his associates had become in 1757, by exploiting the propitious opportunity the distressed Bengal had presented. Mir Kasim's money undoubtedly restored morale in the Nawab's army, but the same object could have been achieved, if the select committee had, instead of flouting the treaty with Mir Jafar and conspiring with Mir Kasim, diverted the latter's resources, as a loan to the state. But the intention was to have a new puppet, and it could be accomplished only by breaking the old treaty and entering into a new one. The old treaty did not curtail the governing authority of the Nawab, which included the responsibility for the defence of the three provinces, and the mutual friendship, provided for in it, imposed on the English the obligation to help

[22] *Ibid.* [23] *Ibid.*, p. 196.

him to discharge it. But instead of invoking Mir Kasim for that purpose, they became instrumental in exciting an unworthy and treacherous ambition in him, and threw their solemn undertaking to the wind. They had been carrying on correspondence with the rebels in the Nawab's dominions, and made use of rebellious designs only to threaten him to agree to their proposal about Mir Kasim. On the one hand the English had imposed on Mir Jafar a monthly levy of one lakh of rupees for the English force, to be maintained ostensibly for his use, and on the other they allowed the rebellious intentions to simmer. Under the treaty it was none of their concern as to who should be nominated to succeed Mir Jafar, but they took up this issue with offence, vehemence and tenacity, and eventually imposed their will only to get a new sheep to fleece. While they themselves were desirous of arriving at a peaceful arrangement with the Mughal Prince, and indeed did so later, they took exception to Mir Jafar's suspected negotiations with that prince, thus denying the Nawab, impoverished and demoralised by them, of the right which belonged to him as ruler of Bengal. They feared that the junction of the two powers might result in the Nawab re-acquiring a ruler's dignity and authority.

As was apprehended, towards the close of the year 1760, Prince Ali Gauhar was discovered marching once again towards Patna, and while he was yet at some distance from the border of Bihar, the British army chief at Patna, Major John Carnac, opened negotiations for peace. The negotiations did not succeed, and about the middle of January 1761, Fort William ordered the Major to launch an offensive. The advice to the Major said: 'All prospects of coming to an accommodation with the Shahzada being cut off, we doubt not but you will vigorously pursue the war, and use your utmost endeavour to drive him out of these provinces, and thereby restore the country to its former tranquillity.[24] But perhaps anticipating this order, Carnac had attacked the invaders on 13 January, 'and obtained a complete victory.'[25] After four years, Jean Law and other French fugitives of Bengal, who had joined the Mughal Prince and been assigned a leading role in his army, were captured by the English. Of the English force, says Major Carnac in his letter dated 17 January 1761, to the select committee: 'We have not lost a man in the action, the whole shock was sustained by the foremost of the Nawab's troops, who were blown up to the number

[24] *Bengal & Madras Papers,* vol. III (Proceedings of the Select Committee from 5 January to 28 December 1761, p. 6).
[25] *Ibid.*

of near four hundred whereof seventy or eighty died on the spot.'[26] The prince's troops began to desert him,[27] and terror-stricken, he fled away. Carnac says in the above letter: 'The prince is now flying before us; but we cannot yet precisely learn whither he is bound; however, if I can get the army along I hope to press him so closely that he shall not himself be able to decide where he will go.[28] In the way, the English troops were fired upon by the people of a zamindar named Ramdas Chand, from 'a small fort', as a result of which three Indian soldiers were wounded. The victorious Major punished them thus, to quote his own words: '...they paid dear for their insolence, several being killed in the assualt, and I caused their principal to be hanged on the spot, and others to be severely *chabucked* and their ears to be cut off.'[29]

In his letter (dated 17 January), the Major sought instruction as to the treatment to be meted out to the prince 'should he in his distress offer to come over to us (as he once did to Colonel Clive)'. And the committee's advice was: 'Should your close pursuit after the Shahzadah render him desperate and incline him to throw himself into your hands for protection, we would by all means recommend it to you to receive him, provided he entirely leaves it to our discretion what shall hereafter be done for him.[30] Before this letter (30 January) left Fort William, negotiations between Carnac and the prince had already reached close to the conclusion of peace terms. The prince had communicated to the English at Patna that his friendship with them should 'assist him in mounting the throne of his ancestors', that they should provide him with 'a place for his residence with a competent allowance until' they 'are in a condition to conduct him to Delhi', and that in the meantime, they should formally announce him as emperor—the Delhi throne was then vacant—and order coins to be struck in his name in the provinces under the government of Bengal.'[31] For the consideration that the defeated prince might become emperor, the English received and treated him with the reverence usually shown to a victor. 'It is inconceivable', says Carnac, 'how the name of King merely should prepossess all minds so strongly in his favor, and yet so it is that even in his distressed condition he is held by both Musulmen and Gentoos in a kind of adoration. We may hereafter have it in our power to employ this prepossession to our advantage.[32] More than this prospect of the future was

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 8. [27] *Ibid.*, p. 10. [28] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 10. [30] *Ibid.*, p. 9. [31] *Ibid.*, p. 13. [32] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

the immediate gain: 'the axe is laid', says Carnac, 'to the root of the troubles which have so long infested this province'.

The prince was comfortably lodged, and in the meantime inquiries were set afoot to find out whether the powerful chiefs at the Delhi Court, who had become virtually the king-makers, were favourably inclined towards Ali Gauhar. More than two months had elapsed since his arrival in Bihar, but he was not to be allowed to quit in a state of disturbed mind which would cause the English the loss of a possession they considerably valued, and the Fort William president, Vansittart, apprised him of the situation, as they looked at it, and in which waiting was inevitable. In his letter to the Prince (7 March), Vansittart said:

> I have been honoured with Your Majesty's letter, recommending the striking of siccas, and causing the Cutbah[33] to be read in your name. I am ready to obey you in every instance of fidelity and attachment, and all the English Chiefs in general are in the same disposition, of which the measures taken by Major Carnac for your service may be esteemed a proof. But to resolve hastily upon a step of so much importance, cannot, as I conceive, be of any benefit to Your Majesty's high concerns, but on the contrary the doing it, without being first acquainted with the pleasure of Shah Abdulla and the other Omrahs of the Empire, may rather be productive of dissatisfaction and jealousy in their minds. I presume, therefore, to recommend that you first write to Abdullah and the other Chiefs at Delhi, that the siccas and Cutbah may be established there, and your faithful servants in Bengal and Behar will immediately follow their example, and regard it as their own happiness and honor. What I thought suitable to the times, and productive of future benefits, I have taken the liberty to address to you, and hope you will regard it as a mark of my obedience and true attachment.[34]

But the prince, suspecting that his departure was being deliberately procrastinated, began to entertain misgivings about English intentions, and indicated that they 'want to make a State prisoner of

[33] 'The *Khutba,* a prayer said in the principal mosques every Friday after the morning service for Mahomed, his descendants and the reigning sovereign in a Musulman State. To be mentioned in the prayer has always been one of the most cherished prerogatives of royalty among the nations of Islam.' (*Ibid.,* p. 18 fn.)

[34] *Ibid.,* p. 21.

him, and that perhaps for life'.[35] The English had no such intention. Delhi then was in a state of chaos: the King had been murdered by his Prime Minister, the Marathas who had ascended to supremacy had been humbled by Ahmad Shah Abdali, and the latter was planning to retire to his native land, and (the English) would not take a hasty step for which they might have to repent later. They paid him a considerable amount for his daily expenses (from Mir Kasim's pocket of course), and, as he grew impatient to go, raised his allowance to a lakh of rupees per month, in order to 'induce him to stay on till matters were ripe for' their 'accompanying him.'[36] He 'proposed giving' to the English 'the Subahdarry' of the Bengal provinces, in preference to Mir Kasim, saying they were 'more capable and more worthy'.[37] But even this inducement did not work, the situation, so far as the English were concerned, having been further complicated by the news that Shuja-ud-daula, Nawab of Oudh, was marching with an army towards Bihar, that his intention was to proceed to Delhi with Ali Gauhar's force, and that with the combined might of the two armies, he would put the latter on the throne; but the British apprehended that Shuja's target of attack might be Bengal. Just then, intelligence from Delhi lifted the fog of uncertainty: Abdali, before leaving, nominated Ali Gauhar to the vacant throne by the name of Shah Alam (known to history as Shah Alam II), and he was acclaimed King by the Chiefs already favourably inclined towards him. In the beginning of June, Shah Alam was allowed to go, and was escorted by an English force up to the boundary of Bihar. Before leaving, the new King conferred titles of royal recognition on Mir Kasim and Colonel Eyre Coote, the new commander of the English force at Patna. Mir Kasim paid the King, on the advice of Coote, rupees twelve lakhs,[38] as a mark of his obedience, which, in effect, meant recognition of British overlordship in Bengal.

The Mughal Prince's fresh invasion, his surrender to the English, his expression of dependence on them to help him ascend the Delhi throne, anouncement nominating him to the imperial government while he was yet a guest or dignified prisoner of the English, the imperial recognition accorded to him by the English by making him a handsome present, and by ordering (on receipt of the news of his nomination) coins to be struck in his name, had the inevi-

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 24 (Carnac's letter dated 24 February, 1761 to Fort William).
[36] *Ibid.* [37] *Ibid.*, p. 30 (Carnac's letter dated 30 march).
[38] Vansittart, *op cit.*, p. 208

table effect of further humbling Mir Kasim as Nawab. Even during the Nawabship of Mir Jafar, the Patna chief, Ram Narain's docility and demoralised state of the Nawab's army had enabled the English to assume complete mastery over political affairs of that province. It was Mir Kasim's money that had helped the English raise an army powerful enough to resist the fugitive Mughal prince, who had sustained his little army mainly with the money provided by a feudal chief, Kamdar Khan. When the Mughal Prince was advancing towards Bihar in December 1760, Mir Kasim paid the English another three lakhs of rupees 'upon Colonel Caillaud's further representation of the wants of the forces at Patna'.[39] He had yet to repay to the Company Rupees twenty lakhs due from Mir Jafar and whose recovery had been postponed on the late Nawab pawning his jewellery with the Company; (Mir Kasim had undertaken to pay off this amount also). It is perhaps this amount to which Vansittart refers when he says that the Nawab 'also gave orders for six or seven lakhs to be paid, in the month of December, January, and February towards the discharge of his engagements with the Company, which orders were punctually complied with.' He further says that 'these helps given by the Nabob, enabled' the English 'to spare two lacks [lakhs] and a half' for the Company's Madras settlement.[40]

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 178. [40] *Ibid.*, pp. 178-9.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Mir Kasim's Complaints against the English : Anarchy in Bengal

MONEY WAS constantly flowing out of Mir Kasim's treasury, and the only chance of reimbursing it, while he was in Bihar, was to collect long-standing arrears of the government share of revenues from Ram Narain. The English leaders' encouragement to Ram Narain during the Nawabship of Mir Jafar had been used by him to adopt a defiant attitude towards the late Nawab and to withhold revenue accounts for three years.[1] English army officers dictated orders to Ram Narain, and his job was to carry them out meekly. Being sure of their support, Ram Narain stoutly put off the new Nawab's demands for settlement of the accounts. The English leaders at Patna considered the Nawab as an intruder and treated him shabbily. When he made an attempt to establish a junction of his forces with those of his subordinates at Patna, he was snubbed by a strong resentment of Major Carnac. The Major made a complaint to the select committee, which, in reply, said: 'The Nabob's sending for Ramnarain and Rajebullub with their forces, without first consulting you, was a very imprudent step.'[2] With regard to Ram Narain, the select committee had earlier tendered the following advice to Carnac (in its letter dated 9 February 1761):

> We observe, that when Colonel Caillaud began his march to Patna, the beginning of last year, he had particular instructions from Colonel Clive, and the rest of the committee, to protect Ramnarain; in case of the Nabob's making any attempt against his person or honor. We believe such an injunction at this time unnecessary, as the present Nabob seems to be well inclined towards Ramnarain; but should it prove otherwise, it is our resolution to have the same regard to the former engagements, in his favour, as was then designed; and therefore direct you,

[1] *Bengal & Madras Papers,* vol. III, p. 196.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 190 (the Select Committee's letter to Major Carnac).

in case of necessity, to protect Ramnarain against all violence and injustice that may be offered to his person, honor, or fortune.[3]

Later (7 March), the committee asked Carnac to 'give' the Nawab 'the assistance he may apply for, to reduce to obedience such zemindars, as have been disaffected to the government of Moorshedabad, and to enable him to establish security, in the several countries of the Behar province, and collect the revenues due therefrom'.[4] On 28 April, the committee wrote to the Major: 'As, on the one hand, we are inclined to support Ramnarain in the government of Patna, with all its just advantages; so, on the other hand, we would protect the Nabob in the respect and authority due to him, and afford him every assistance for the collection of his revenues, without which it is impossible he can pay the arrears of his troops, or support the other charges of his government.'[5]

It was in the Company's interest to revive payments of revenues to the Nawab, and therefore Carnac exerted himself to give effect to the select committee's instruction, but Ram Narain, sure of English support and also of the Company's necessity to retain him, would not respond. Carnac himself says (in his letter dated 8 May 1761 to the select committee): 'Ramnarain, the Naib (or deputy Governor) of the Patna province, had three years accounts of his administration to settle, to avoid which, he made use of every shift and artifice that could be invented, and so effectually screened himself under the protection of the Colonel and Major, that for four months together not a single explanation could be had from him.'[6] But Ram Narain remained adamant, and was not effectively advised by his English masters to behave properly with the Nawab.

Colonel Coote treated the Nawab quite as slightingly as did Major Carnac. When, after making heavy payments to Shah Alam, Mir Kasim 'spoke to the Colonel' to obtain from the King his *sanad* affirming him (Mir Kasim) in the Nawabship of Bengal, the Colonel, says the Nawab, 'forbade me', and 'I was under a necessity of acquiescing in his pleasure'. Thus all the influence and friendship that the Nawab's money secured from the King-designate was appropriated by the English to their own advantage.

Mir Kasim's distress and helplessness was more pitiable than his

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 180. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 183. [5] *Ibid.*, pp. 192-3.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 196.

predecessor's. A few quotations from the letters he wrote to Vansittart from Patna will give an idea:

> Mr. Watts came to me with Rajebullub in the name of the Colonel, and proposed the confirmation of Camgar Cawn, with many other demands, and said several unbecoming things, which I think not fit to repeat; in short I have no power in any one affair of the government.... There is a just demand on Maharaja Ramnarain of large sums, on account of the last four years. If I make an enquiry into his accounts, I shall receive a large supply of money; notwithstanding this, I remain here wearied out, and involved in vexations. The army murmurs on account of the dearness of grains, and the subjects are reduced, by their disorders, to the most fatal extremities.[7] (Letter without date received by Vansittart on 16 June.)
>
> Ever since my arrival here, the English seepoys have been stationed at the gates of the city, and would not permit my people to pass and repass. . . . I wrote a letter to the Colonel, requesting he would take off the seepoys from the gates, and that then I would go to the Kellat. Upon the receipt of this letter, which contained no more than what I have here mentioned, the Colonel was very angry, and flew into such a passion, that he said he would send for the King again! ... Since the day the Colonel arrived here, he has declared to me, that I must comply with every thing that he shall recommend; and, accordingly, he has since told me in person, and by messages brought by Mr. Watts and Sheik Cumaul, that "I must appoint Nuncoomar to the Fougedarree of Hoogly, give the government of Purnea to the son of Allee Cooley Cawn, restore Muzuffer Allee (who plundered Nasir-ool-Moolk's jewels to the amount of eight lacks of rupees) to the Zemindaree of Carrackpoor, restore Camgar Cawn to the Zemindarree of Mey, and regulate the Zemindarrees of Radshay and Dinagepoor, according to his pleasure." ... I apprehend the seepoys will assemble, as in Meer Jaffier Allee Cawn's time, and put my life in danger, and bring shame and dishonor upon my family. In the eight months of my government, I have scarce had leisure to drink a little water, I have not had a minute's time to eat or enjoy sleep. . . . My shame and dishonor are compleated, and I have no one to complaint but to you.[8] (The Nawab's letter dated 16 June.)
>
> About twelve at night Maharajah Ramnarain collected his

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 203-4. [8] *Ibid.*, pp. 209-14.

people together, and sent word to the Colonel, that I had got my troops in readiness to attack the Kella in the morning, and that I would spare neither of them. The Colonel, being deceived by the snare, got his people ready! My Hircarras brought me intelligence of it, but I gave no credit to it. This morning Mr. Watts entered my private apartment, which is near the Zenana, calling out, "Where is the Nabob?" and then stopt. After him Colonel Coote, in a great passion with his horsemen, Peons, Seepoys and others, with a cocked pistol in each hand, came swearing into my tent. It so happened, that I was asleep in the Zenana, and none of my guards were present. How shall I express the unbecoming manner in which the Colonel went about from tent to tent, with thirty-five horsemen and two hundred seepoys, calling out, "Where is the Nabob?" He left some of his people at the Zenana and Dewanconna, and went towards the south tent. The eunuch of the Serai and Mr. Watts, prevented his entering, saying, the Nabob is asleep, and this is the private tent of the Zenana. The Colonel returned, and proceeded through my whole army, and seeing every one without arms, or any preparations, went back to the Kella. . . . I appeal to your judgment, what shame and disgrace the news of this event will bring upon me in the minds of my enemies and equals. . . . In what manner will my troops behave to me, after seeing these things?[9] (The Nawab's letter dated 17 June.)

There is no evidence to suggest that the English army officers at Patna misbehaved with the connivance of or on any instruction from the Fort William authorities; on the contrary, those authorities deplored the misbehaviour, and even withdrew Coote from Patna. Even the Patna chief of the English factory, McGuire, corroborating the Nawab's complaint, wrote to Vansittart (17 June):

> I have sent the Nabob word, to bear with his treatment a few days longer till your answer arrives, and not to take any hasty determination thereon, that you will certainly bear him through; but he apprehends daily insults from his own people, now they find he is insulted publickly by the English, by whom they were before kept in some awe. If you find yourself unable to carry the Nabob through his present difficulties, let the Rajah be declared Subah; and let this miserable great man return inglorious, disgraced, and despised to Moorshedabad, there to enjoy

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 216-8.

a single day of quiet, to which he has been an entire stranger ever since his arrival here.[10]

But in spite of the restraining advices—which, of course, were mild—the Nawab continued to be slighted, ignored, and ill-treated. Seventeen months after his treacherous conspiracy and assumption of the government, we find him complaining more helplessly than before (while he was at Patna):

From my first accession to the government, I have perceived, that many English gentlemen were ill affected to me, and that the country was not in my own hands. The cause of the disaffection of those gentlemen I know not; you may. The cause of the country's not being in my hands is this; that from the factory of Calcutta to Cossimbuzar, Patna and Dacca, all the English chiefs, with their gomastahs, officers and agents, in every district of the government, act as collectors, renters, zemindars and taalookdars, and setting up the Company's colors, allow no power to my officers. And besides this, the gomastahs and other servants in every district, in every gunge, perganah and village, carry on a trade in oil, fish, straw, bamboos, rice, paddy, beetle-nut, and other things; and every man with a Company's dustuck in his hand, regards himself as not less than the Company. In this case I never can have any authority as long as I live.[11] (Letter to Vansittart dated 26 March 1762.)

In May 1762, we again find him complaining:

Your gentlemen ... plunder the people, injure and disgrace my servants, with a resolution to expose the government to contempt; and from the borders of Hindostan to Calcutta, make it their business to expose me to scorn. In every perganah and every village, they have established ten or twenty new factories, and setting up the colors, and shewing the dustucks of the Company, they use their utmost endeavors to oppress the reits, merchants, and other people of the country. The Englishmen. . . . bring shame and disgrace upon my people, holding themselves in readiness to beat and abuse them. . . . They forcibly take away the goods and commodities of the reiats, merchants, &c. for a fourth part of their value. . . . But means of these oppressions, and my being deprived of my duties, I suffer a yearly

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 220-1. [11] Vansittart, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 2-3.

loss of near twenty-five lacks of rupees. In this case, how can I keep clear of debts? How can I provide for the payment of my tribute to the king, and for the expences of my army and my household? ... And every one of these (the Company's) gomastahs has such a power, that he imprisons the (my) collector, and deprives him of all authority whenever he pleases.[12]

In 'the middle of the year 1762', Syed Rajab Ali, a landlord, described the miserable condition in his estate, thus:

Now ... Englishmen ... violently exact large sums for presents, and for their peons expences, and take, at a low rate, whatever oil, &c. they buy. By means of these oppressions, the merchants, peons, reiats, &c. of the perganah, have taken to flight, and the hauts, gauts, gunges, and golahs, are entirely ruined. Moreover, they prevent the reits from carrying on their business; they rob and plunder them wherever they meet them on the road.[13]

An Englishman, sergeant Brego, made the following corroboratory account in his letter (from Bakarganj) dated 26 May 1762 to Governor Vansittart:

This place was of great trade formerly, but now brought to nothing by the following practices.

A gentleman sends a gomastah here to buy or sell; he immediately looks upon himself as sufficient to force every inhabitant, either to buy his goods, or sell him theirs; and on refusal (in case of non-capacity) a flogging or confinement immediately ensues. This is not sufficient even when willing, but a second force is made use of, which is, to engross the different branches of trade to themselves, and not to suffer any persons to buy or sell the articles they trade in; and if the country people do it, then a repetition of their authority is put in practice; and again, what thing they purchase, they think the least they can do is, to take them for a considerable deal less than another merchant, and oftentimes refuse paying that; and my interfering occasions an immediate complaint.

These, and many other oppressions more than can be related, which are daily used by the Bengal gomastahs, is the reason that this place is growing destitute of inhabitants, every day numbers leave the town, to seek a residence more safe.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 98-101. [13] *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5.

> Before, justice was given in the public cutcherree, but now every gomastah is become a judge, and every one's house a cutcherree; they even pass sentences on the zemindars themselves, and draw money from them by pretended injuries, such as a quarrel with some of their peons.[14]

On 25 April 1762, writing from Bhagalpur, Warren Hastings complained to the same effect Vansitart:

> I beg leave to lay before you a grievance, which loudly calls for redress, and will, unless duly attended to, render ineffectual any endeavors to create a firm and lasting harmony between the Nabob and the Company. I mean, the oppressions committed under the sanction of the English name, and through the want of spirit in the Nabob's subjects to oppose them. This evil, I am well assured, is not confined to our dependents alone, but is practised all over the country, by people falsely assuming the habits of our seepoys, or calling themselves our gomastahs. As on such occasions the great power of the English intimidates the people from making any resistance; so, on the other hand, the indolence of the Bengalees, or the difficulty of gaining access to those who might do them justice, prevents our having knowledge of the oppressions, and encourages their continuance, to the great, though unmerited scandal of our government.
>
> A party of seepoys, who were on the march before us, afforded sufficient proofs of the rapacious and indolent spirit of those people, where they are left to their own discretion. Many complaints against them were made me on the road; and most of the petty towns and serais were deserted at our approach, and the shops shut up, from the apprehensions of the same treatment from us.[15]

Hastings again complained in his letter dated 26 May:

> The world, judging only from facts, sees the Nabob's authority publickly insulted; his officers imprisoned; seepoys sent against his forts; and he is told, that the chief of the English, in these parts, disavows the Nabob's right to the Subahship. The obvious end of such symptoms is an open rupture. The Nabob's enemies receive encouragement from this hope; and the traitors about his person, use it as an argument to them to persist in their revolt.[16]

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 113-4. [15] *Ibid.*, pp. 79-81. [16] *Ibid.*, pp. 63-4.

Hastings, who had been entrusted, by the Fort William authorities, with the task of bringing about rapprochement between the Nawab and the English, reported, in a desperate and helpless state, that he found it 'an impossible task'.[17]

Even the Fort William Governor, Vansittart, felt helpless, and could not prevail on his colleagues to accord the Nawab better treatment. The assurances he gave him of a better future did not lessen his anxiety and apprehensions. 'Notwithstanding all the assurances I could give the Nabob', says Vansittart, 'he was made so extremely uneasy by these continual insults, that his own people and the whole country, could not help observing it'.[18] And when Vansittart persisted in urging considerateness for the 'wretch'—that is how he is described in contemporary correspondence—of his creation, the entire governing body of Fort William became resentful. Narrating their reaction, Vansittart says:

> I strove as long as possible to remove these disorders by private cautions to the gentlemen concerned; but finding those means ineffectual, I was obliged to lay them before the Board, where, however, for the most part, they met with as little attention. They were usually construed as forged pretexts of the Nabob, to pick a quarrel with us, and encroach upon our rights. I was reproached with the credit which I gave to the Nabob's representations, and every gentleman, who was interested in them, regarded me as his personal enemy. In short, though the complaints became every day more frequent, yet not one was ever redressed, nor even thought worthy of an enquiry.[19]

An impression had spread throughout that the Nawab was a British lackey and that a Nawab could continue in his position only as long as they wished; and therefore the Company's servants and private British merchants considered the three provinces as their dependency. If anarchy eventually replaced whatever order was left, the governing council of Fort William thought, the English would be the worse sufferers. The Council, therefore, deputed Vansittart to pay a visit to the Nawab at Monghyr, which the latter had made his headquarters, and to bring about a rapprochement between him and the English. It was obvious that what undermined the authority of the Nawab was the way he had been helped to ascend the throne of Bengal. However at the interview a cause emerged, which if remedied, Vansittart believed, would set in

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 64. [18] *Ibid.*, p. 13. [19] *Ibid.*, pp. 109-10.

motion the process of restoration of normalcy. In the confusion that followed Plassey, English merchants transcended the boundry of the domain of their trade, as settled in the imperial farman (the privilege order) of 1717, causing loss of revenue to the government and displacing Indian merchants. The Nawab complained to Vansittart that, in disobedience of the farman the English merchants were now partaking in inland trade, such 'as salt, beetle-nut, tobacco, &c.' and that 'it occasioned incredible damage and disorder to his government'.[20] Vansittart told him in reply: ' ... as to the inland trade, or the trade from place to place in the country, we meant only to carry it on upon the same footing with other merchants.'[21] But when Vansittart honestly reported about it to his people, he observed: 'Although I was of the same opinion with the Nabob, as to the rights of the firmaun; that they could not be construed to extend further than the trade in articles imported by shipping, and the manufactures and products of the country for exportation; yet I was unwilling to give up an advantage, which had been enjoyed by the Company's servants, in a greater or less degree for five or six years.'[22] The Nawab was disinclined to grant another privilege to the English, for two reasons: the English who had already unlawfully started dealing in private trade did not, unlike Indian merchants, pay any duty and violently resisted demands made by the Nawab's officers; secondly, the English possessing much greater resources and better organisation, would deprive Indian merchants of whatever trade was left to them. But when Vansittart insisted, the Nawab proposed that he would like to declare all inland trade duty-free on the ostensible excuse that such a step 'would draw a number of merchants into his country, and encrease his revenues, by encouraging the cultivation and manufacture of a larger quantity of goods for sale'; at the same time, he added, 'it would effectually cut off the principal subject of the disputes, which had disturbed the good understanding between us'.[23] Vansittart preferred continuance of the duty, agreeing that the English would also duly pay it. But, as he later reported, his motive was different: 'This scheme we discouraged, as it would immediately render the dustuck useless, and prejudice our Honorable Masters business, by enhancing the number of purchasers.'[24] As was inevitable, the Nawab assented, and a duty of nine per cent 'on the prime cost'—the same as was levied on Muslim traders—was settled. New 'Regulations' were

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 142. [21] *Ibid.*, p. 143. [22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 159-60. [24] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

drawn up, signed and circulated by both sides to their respective officers. Undertaking was also given on behalf of the English and instructions were issued that 'merchants ... shall, on no account, use force in buying or selling.'[25] The Nawab was similarly required to restrain his officers. The Nawab made several other complaints, and Vansittart promised to redress them. For example, the Nawab said:

> In the perganahs of Cuddy-barry and Caloo-Bauboo-para, and my other jagheer lands, under the jurisdiction of Assam, the revenues formerly amounted to forty thousand rupees, arising from the trade of salt, large timbers, and several other articles. The government's people used to carry on the commerce there, and no other merchants were permitted to traffick with the mountaineers. Two years ago Mr. Chevalier went there, and he has put an entire stop to the trade of the sircar, and himself trafficks with the mountaineers, from whence a loss arises to my revenues and he forcibly seizes the taalookdars and reiats of the aforesaid perganahs, to make them draw timbers, by which means they are brought to the last distress. In the perganahs of Gopalpoor and Dukkunbar-poor, and other districts, where salt is made, the people of the Company's factory work the salt pans; and they take possession of all the salt which the molunghees of other perganahs have made, by which means I suffer a very great loss. Moreover, they oblige the reiats to receive money from them for purchasing rice, and by force and violence they take more than the market price affords; and the reiats are running away on account of these oppressions.[26]

Vansittart, anxious to restore peace, told the Nawab in reply:

> I have already wrote to all the chiefs of the factories, not to oppress the reiats and inhabitants of the perganahs, nor make any disturbance in the affairs of the sircar ... that they must not work the salt-pans themselves, nor interrupt the merchants and renters of salt-pans, who pay the government's rents.... The gomastahs at Gwalparah shall be strictly charged to carry on their commercial business as formerly, and not to trade themselves with the mountaineers.[27]

All this happened in the month of December 1762, and as soon

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 159. [26] *Ibid.*, pp. 166-7. [27] *Ibid.*, pp. 169-72.

as Vansittart left for Calcutta, the Nawab circulated the 'regulations' and the former's letter to him to all the English factories, and his orders thereon to his officers. These, instead of inducing peace, exacerbated the haughtiness of the Englishmen at the factories, and they rushed protests to Fort William, where they found a receptive atmosphere. The first to protest was the Dacca factory. The protests led to the summoning of an emergency meeting, which annulled the entire proceedings that took place between Vansittart and the Nawab. The Fort William Board said:

> The Board having maturely considered the same, are unanimously of opinion, that in the letter from the President to Cossim Allee Cawn, he assumed a right to which he was no ways authorized; that the regulations proposed by him, are dishonorable to us as Englishmen, and tend to the ruin of all public and private trade; that the President's issuing out regulations independently of the Council, is an absolute breach of their privileges; and that, therefore, directions should be sent to Dacca, to suspend paying any regard to the regulations and others, which the Nabob has sent to their factory.[28]

On 1 February 1763, Governor Vansittart again tried to reason with the Board, saying in his Minute:

> The Honorable the Court of Directors, as well as their servants here, have always understood a distinction between the trade in articles imported, and to be exported by shipping, and the private inland trade, that is, the trade from place to place in the country, in commodities produced and consumed in the country; of which salt, beetle-nut, and tobacco, are the chief articles. For the former trade, the Company's dustuck has always been granted; but the latter, has been carried on with the dustuck of the country government, and their duties paid. Our Honorable Masters have expressly ordered, in more than one of their letters, that the trade in salt and beetlenut shall not be carried on to the prejudice of the revenues of the country government. And yourselves, gentlemen, in your letter of the 15th of November, transmitted me a list of the shahbunder duties, unusually paid by the gentlemen at Luckypoor, upon salt and tobacco, in order to assist me in finally settling those matters with the Nabob upon a solid plan. Can that plan be solid where

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 230-1 (Consultations dated 17 January 1763).

nothing is fixed? And where the English gomastahs shall be under no controul, but regarding themselves far above the magistrates of the country where they reside, take upon them to decide not only their own disputes with the merchants and inhabitants, but those also of one merchant and inhabitant with another? Or is it possible, the government can collect their due revenues in such circumstances? ... For my own part, I think that the honor and dignity of our nation would be better maintained, by a scrupulous and careful restraint of the dustuck, than by extending it beyond its usual bounds.[29]

Circumstances were favourable to the English, and had given them an opportunity to ride roughshod over the economy and polity of the country; and therefore Vansittart's pleading went in vain. 'Unhappily,' he himself regrets, 'the jealousies had arisen to so great a height, that these palliatives had no longer their effect; and from this period I had not only to content with the violence of the gentlemen, who had now the rule of our affairs, but the confirmed distrust and rage of the Nabob.'[30] When, in the middle of February 1763, Fort William received complaints from the Patna and Dacca factories, saying that the Nawab's officers had stopped 'some bullocks loaded with the Company's saltpetre at one of the chokeys or guards', and that 'obstructions were given to their private trade at Sirampoor', the governing council 'resolved that all trade should be carried on as before; and in case any of the government's officers should obstruct it, they should be opposed by force and seized.'[31] About the same time, Middleton of the 'Luckypoor' factory complained that two servants of that factory (Ghulam Husain and Mohammed Ghazi) 'were beset by' the Nawab's officer (Agha Nazim), and sought Fort William's instruction, emphasising: 'I must inform you, that these two men are of a considerable family, who have always been much respected in the country, and remarkable for their attachment to the English, particularly in the year 1756, when they afforded protection and assistance to our servants, at a time that it was refused by the French, and every one else.'[32] Middleton's complaint added:

Our cloth business in the Manorgunge perganah, where several of the Company's sortments are made, is entirely put a stop to by one Comar Allee Wadadar there, and our gomastahs and

[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 234-7. [30] *Ibid.*, p. 253. [31] *Ibid.*, pp. 279-80.
[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 310-11.

other servants have been obliged to return to Lucknow, leaving a large sum outstanding, in the pykars and weavers hands. This Comar Allee is the person who ordered, by publick beat of tom-tom, that none of his tenants should, at their peril, transact any business with the English, ... Several of our boats have been stopped on various pretences, although we have paid the Nabob's duties as in former times. Yesterday advise was brought me, that some people belonging to the government were measuring our grounds, in order to take possession of them, and had demanded rents from our tenants. I immediately sent a few seepoys and peons who, this morning (16 February) brought in two of the principals employed on this occasion. Soon after I had seized these people, a number of men collected themselves together, and have been plundering the houses of our tenants, and carried away their cattle, &c. This has obliged me to send a strong party of seepoys to the extent of our bounds, to prevent any further insults of the kind.[33]

In the absence of an account of the government side, it is difficult to adjudge whether, or how much of, the above complaint was a genuine grievance, but Fort William 'resolved', without caring to find out the version of the other side, 'to seize the three officers of the government complained against'.[34] With this 'resolution', Vansittart also agreed; his reason, as he says, was: 'The question was now, whether the persons complained against should be seized, or war made directly with the Nabob himself; I concurred in the former, as I yet did not doubt but the Nabob would submit to any terms, that should be proposed to him by the Council, rather than enter into a war.'[35]

The Fort William Council now applied itself to settling a lasting policy for trade relations between the Company and the Nawab's government. Questions were framed, and opinions were invited from leading men in the Company's employ, who expressed themselves elaborately, most of them suggesting, in effect, contravention of the terms of the Mughal *farman* and the treaties entered into with Siraj-ud-daula and Mir Jafar. 'The majority,' to quote Vansittart, 'declared the extent of the privileges of our private trade to be unlimited, and that the duties which had hitherto been paid to the country government on salt, and some other articles, were only a compliment which might be continued or not, as we pleased. This pretension must appear to all reasonable

[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 312-4. [34] *Ibid.*, p. 314. [35] *Ibid.*

men as unjust as it was new.'[36] Vansittart examined the question retrospectively, with reference to the *farman* and the two treaties entered into with Siraj-ud-daula and Mir Jafar, and said:

> Those being compared, it will be found that neither of those treaties convey to us any new privileges, but confirm those of the firmaun. Now the firmaun, as I apprehend, did not give us a right to carry on the private inland trade, that is, the trade from place to place in the country, in the commodities of the country, as salt, beetle-nut, tobacco, &c. It did not, I say, give us a right to carry it on at all, much less to carry it on custom-free, to the total ruin of the merchants of the country, and the great loss of the Nabob's revenues. Neither did Serajah Dowla, or Meer Jaffier, understand it so; the former would never suffer us to meddle in that trade, and the latter prevented it as much as he could, and complained of it as an injustice, and an innovation.[37]

But when, on 5 March 1763, the Fort William Council, with the assumption of superiority over the Nawab, and without giving him an opportunity to have his say, took a decision in accordance with the majority opinion. Vansittart had to contradict himself and write to the Nawab:

> I am now, in my own name, and in the name of the gentlemen of Council, to give you the following account of what has been hitherto resolved on by us. The Firmaun, and other public orders of the Court, together with the subsequent treaties with the Nabobs, having been referred to, and strictly examined, we find that the English, having the Company's dustuck, are thereby entitled to carry on their trade, as well foreign as inland, in the province of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, duty free. By the tenor of them therefore the Council are determined to abide.

And as if to show the Nawab undue favour, Vansittart added in his communication to the Nawab:

> We have however taken information of the custom that has hitherto prevailed in the different parts of the country, with respect to the English paying a duty on certain articles of inland trade, and from these we learn, that the articles of salt and

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 315. [37] *Ibid.*, pp. 270-1.

tobacco are the only ones which have paid such duty; and that the latter article has paid it only at the factories of Luckypoor and Dacca. This being the case, and as we do not mean to break entirely through this established custom, although the aforementioned grants give us a full sanction to trade duty free, we have determined, that a consideration shall continue to be paid to your government on salt, after the rate of two and half *per cent*.[38]

The resolution virtually gave licence to the Company's gomastahs against whom the Nawab and his officers had made complaints of violence and oppression. Vansittart, communicating this part of the resolution to the Nawab, said:

> With respect to our gomastahs, we cannot admit, that they shall be under any actual controul of the officers of your government; but we have laid down certain regulations, whereby to restrain them from committing injuries, or abuses on the country people.[39]

And as if this was not enough, the Council asked the President to add to his letter (when a draft of it was laid before the Council) a paragraph, in which the following threat was held out to the Nawab: 'The ill behaviour, and violent oppression, committed by your officers in all parts, by an abuse of the authority granted them by that agreement, are so notorious and insupportable, that if they are not put an immediate stop to, the friendship between us will be broken.'[40]

[38] Vansittart, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 21-2.
[39] *Ibid.* [40] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

War with Mir Kasim : Mir Jafar Nawab Again

THE STAGE was now reached when tolerance and patience appeared to Mir Kasim to be an invitation to ever greater humiliation and disgrace, and he considered it imperative to assert his authority, though with caution. Assertiveness would naturally mean, as it actually did, provocation to the English, who considered themselves masters of the provinces, and rightly believed it was they who could make or depose Nawabs. It was obvious that only meek submission to the will, not only of the English council, but also of the factory chiefs, English merchants and their agents, could maintain the Nawab in his position, and that a contrary behaviour would drive him to the exit. Mir Kasim was fed up with disgraceful and distressing happenings with which his Nawabship —of thirty months so far—had been crowded; and his struggle to regain his dignity and authority actually brought him on the pathway to the exit.

The events that led him to it opened with an incident under the Patna factory. While the Fort William Council had unilaterally decided to carry on most of the inland trade duty-free, the Nawab's men, not yet apprised of the new decision, were guiding themselves by the old arrangement between the Nawab and Vansittart, and some of them, in exercise of the authority vested in them, demanded custom from English merchants. The Patna factory chief, Ellis, would not brook any interference from the Nawab's officers, and on receiving information of 'interruption' in the 'business of the factory at Mow', he was provoked, and despatched three companies of soldiers 'to free the business ... and to seize the persons concerned'. The Nawab's men at the outpost were overpowered, and the Nawab's collector, Akbar Ali Khan, was taken prisoner, and carried to Patna. The officer commanding the three companies left on the spot a guard of twelve soldiers for future need. 'The Nabob' (to quote Vansittart) 'incensed at this outrage, committed almost before his eyes, in the first impulse of his passion,

sent out a party of 500 horse to intercept the seepoys, and release his officer.'[1] But 'arriving too late for this service', they attacked the guard, killed four of them, and carried the rest, 'with the Company's gomastahs, prisoners before the Nabob'. The Nawab 'contented himself with reprimanding the gomastahs, for being the instrument of such an insult of his dignity, and dismissed them'.[2] Commenting on this event, Vansittart says: 'The Nabob's behaviour, upon this occasion, shows how much he was irritated by it; and, at the same time, how careful he was, even upon the greatest provocation, to avoid coming to extremities.[3] The above incident was construed by the Patna factory chief and his council as a prelude to the Nawab's intention of attacking and taking possession of the factory; the Fort William Council was informed that the factory had received intelligence to this effect, and a suggestion was made that in order to forestall the intention, the English might occupy the town of Patna. This, according to Vansittart, was a pre-meditated plan. He says: 'This I now daily expected to hear of, for I but too plainly saw that Mr. Ellis sought only a pretence to commence open hostilities; but the present occasion was happily removed by the Nabob's prudence.'[4] The prudence the Nawab showed was that he left the vicinity of Patna, and proceeded to Monghyr so that there should be no cause for misunderstanding and misapprehension.

The Nawab was left with a very poor force, and that too, in the atmosphere of distrust created by corrupting influences during the last six years, could not be wholly relied upon. Prudently, therefore, instead of resorting to war, he asserted himself negatively. What he did should be preceded by a narrative of why he did so. On 5 March 1763, a day before the incident mentioned above took place in the jurisdiction of the Patna factory, the Nawab sent two letters to Governor Vansittart, in which he briefly gave an account of the state to which his country had been reduced:

> At a time when this government was loaded with a balance of revenues due to the King, the arrears of the troops, and debts owing to the English, I marched out of Bengal, and repaired to the extremity of the province of Bahar, in order to settle these matters. That country being thus left without a ruler, every village and district became ruined by the oppressions of the English agents and gomastahs, an entire stop was put to collecting

[1] *Bengal & Madras Papers*, vol. III, p. 34. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 35. [4] *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6.

the revenues, and the merchants and the poor, and all my officers, and muttaseddees of the public and private receipts of custom, were distressed, and deprived of their daily bread; and I am a sufferer in the revenues due to my administration, by near a krore of rupees.... Afterwards, on your return to Calcutta, contrary to your agreement with me, you detached forces, to carry on the business of the Company and English gentlemen by compulsion, and to beat and chastise my officers if they offered to speak a word. For these three years I have not got a single rupee ... from the English gentlemen, or their gomastahs; at the same time, they have by violence levied fines and penalties, and sums for losses in their trade, on my officers, and still continue to levy them; and if any of my officers refuse to submit to this, they pour a storm of complaints on his head. ... I can never approve of my people and merchants being distressed, my country oppressed, myself despised, and subjected to daily insults, and my officers and servants in treated.... Mr. Ellis, for these two years past, has been endeavoring all in his power to hurt my affairs, and make me appear little in the eyes of the world; nay, is at this time taking pains daily to involve me in trouble, parading his companies of seepoys to provoke me; and omitting no opportunity of depreciating me both in this my own country, and to Shuja-ul-Dowla, and other great men at court, sending all whatever he can devise to my discredit, by means of Shitabroy to Shuja-ul-Dowla, &c., and saying also whatever comes uppermost in his mind to my prejudice in public assemblies. In regard to what you write concerning the royal Firmaun, and your having in view the preparation of another treaty; when you favored me with your company at Mongheer, I told you frequently, that "the power of your people was great, but I had little to oppose it. I desired you to consider, nor entertain the notion, that agreement would be binding with people accustomed to acts of oppression." Is not this an instance of oppression, that the salt-petre farms, which I have allowed unto you gentlemen, upon the produce of which you used to pay formerly three, and three and half rupees per maund, you now forcibly hold at one and three-fourth of a rupee, plundering and injuring my people? In this manner my country is to go to ruin, and I may not utter a word. Besides all this, you write, that it is my own officers who create these disturbances, excercise oppression, and injure the salt-petre farm. This being the case, how can any treaty stand good between us? And how

can it take effect, if such oppression continues? Besides, as you have dispatched the Company's troops to chastise my officers, if they but murmur at these evils, why need you trouble yourselves to make any other treaty?[5]

The Nawab therefore, in a state of irreparable helplessness, took the following negative decisions and made the following expressions of self-denial to the English Governor: (1) He abolished 'all duties whatever in his dominions',[6] in order, as Vansittart says, 'to avoid the daily disputes between' the English 'and his officers, who collected them', and also to end a practice which was discriminatory against his own people. Later, when he learnt of the Fort William Council's decision proposing terms of a new treaty, he sarcastically wrote back in reply (22 March): 'You, and the rest of the Board, in conformity to the Firmaun, husbul-hookums, &c. are willing to give me something upon tobacco, in two places, namely, Dacca and Luckypoor, and will let me have two and a half per cent upon salt. Why should you take upon you so great a hardship?"[7] (2) On the English repeatedly insisting that the Nawab should allow them to mint the Company's coins in his mints, he gave them the necessary 'permission', but advised them that he had stopped minting coins of his government.[8] (3) When constant complaints were made to him against his deputy, Mohammed Ali Beg, at Dacca, he told the Fort William Council: 'I have removed him from Dacca, and sent for him hither; so you may chuse whom you will, amongst the Europeans, to take the management of Dacca.'[9] (4) In his letter dated 5 March 1763, he says: 'I have chosen to give up all those points to you. Now I am in expectation of your answer, to inform me if my life is safe; or if there is anything else to be done?"[10] (5) More desperate is the suggestion he makes to Vansittart in another letter of the same date: 'Be pleased, therefore, to set me free from the uneasiness of such an administration; and set up a person for conducting it, whom the Council may better approve. Full well I know, that they will both condemn me and injure your good name, and bring this about at last. Why do they wait for a charge against me? It is not the part of honest men, to bring an unjust charge against any one, with a view to compass other designs; it is better that you do it at this time.'[11] And lastly, he told Vansittart (in his letter dated 15 March 1763):

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 37-43. [6] *Ibid.*, pp. 48 & 61. [7] *Ibid.*, p. 82.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 48. [9] *Ibid.*, p. 49. [10] *Ibid.*, pp. 40-1.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

'My reputation and honor are dearer to me than life. If you are inclined to let friendship subsist between us, you ought to lay aside these disturbances and altercations, which must produce a rupture; and if you are inclined to break with me, let me know it immediately, that I may have nothing further to do with these things, for I can bear them no longer.'[12]

Mir Kasim's present temper of resignation was not the result merely of his helplessness and desperation, but also of the realisation that the way in which the English had been strengthening their stranglehold in Bengal, suggested that the time had come when they would like to have a change in the Nawabship again. Mir Jafar, as Mir Kasim points out in his letter to Vansittart (22 March), was allowed to retain the Nawabship for three years; and that period of time, Mir Kasim realised, he would soon be completing. Identically, Mir Jafar had re-acquired courage to assert his authority (when he refused to grant the English demand for the three districts) after three years of utter humiliation. As if psychologically three years were the maximum period of tolerance, Mir Kasim began to assert his authority, knowing full well that he was inviting disaster for himself, in the latter half of the third year of his Nawabship. And assuring himself that the English would not allow him a longer span, he wrote to Governor Vansittart (in the letter dated 22 March):

> As three years of my being Nazim are almost expired, and you have never had any pretence, by any deviation on my part; therefore, with a view to effect a change, and turn me out, you have been raising all these disputes and altercations, and have written to your gomastahs, to commit disturbances and ravages in my country; and have sent troops, to beat, bind, confine, and carry off my officers, expecting that I would accordingly make some stir, and you might be furnished with a pretence against me.[13]

The British did not contemplate changing Nawabs after every three years, but since this period happened to set a limit to the toleration of humiliation, it virtually became the term of a Nawab's office in Bengal. If the twice-experienced psychological reaction had not appeared, or if the present Nawab showed willingness to retrace to docility, he might have been tolerated longer, as appears from the proceedings of the Fort William Council. From the

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 57-8. [13] *Ibid.*, pp. 87-8.

account given in previous pages, it is clear that the law of jungle prevailed in Bengal, and the Nawab could ensure continuity for himself only if he allowed that state to continue mutely and meekly. He had hoped that the total abolition of the custom duty, which accounted for half the revenues, would put a stop to English merchants and their agents' violence and oppression, and ensure peace and justice. But a majority of the members of the English governing council 'resolved to insist on his taking customs from other merchants, in the usual manner, altho' not from us.'[14] Self-interest dictated this resolution: if the Indian merchants were placed at part with the English, the latter could not enjoy a more favourable position in the market. Most of the members suggested, in the opinions invited from them, that if the Nawab did not agree to reimpose custom on 'other merchants' and if he did not behave as he was expected to, a force should be sent to punish him. In vain did Vansittart once again try to reason with them. In the opinion he submitted to the Council, in respect to obstruction that was at some places put on English merchants on their refusal to pay duty before it was abolished, he said:

> Wherever the Company's business, or that of their servants, suffered any interruption, our forces have been employed to remove such obstructions, and seize those officers of the government who occasioned them; we have cleared our business, and taken our own satisfaction, and left the Nabob on the suffering side; and a very great sufferer he will undoubtedly be; for it is well known, that the zemindars, collectors, and other officers of the country government, when they see a likelihood of troubles, and their Master's power on the decline, never fail to make use of the opportunity of keeping back their rents. The Nabob's letters are those of a despairing man, who has imagined to himself, that the Board, or the majority of them, have determined at all events to overthrow his government, let him do what he will, and submit never so patiently to their resolution.
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> While we are left in quiet possession of the countries assigned to the Company, and their trading business also is carried on in every part without interruption, it would be as impolitick as unjust, to begin a war without necessity against an ally, whom we are bound by treaty to support.[15]

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 117. [15] *Ibid.*, pp. 117-19.

Like the Nawab, most members of the governing bodies of the Company in Bengal were not at ease, the uneasiness having been occasioned by the Nawab's assertiveness, which looked strange. The Fort William Council, therefore, decided to have a final talk with the Nawab with a view to determining its future course of action; if he would accept the English terms, he could continue; if he would not, he would have to go. The council accordingly charged one of its important members, Amyatt, with the commission of apprising the Nawab with what the English wanted; another member, Hay, was deputed to assist the Commissioner. The Amyatt commission was 'instructed' to require the Nawab (1) to 'revoke all the orders which he sent to his officers, in consequence of' the arrangement arrived at between him and Vansittart relating to inland trade, etc.; (2) to make good 'the losses sustained by the English before.... and after' the above arrangement; (3) to withdraw the orders he had issued abolishing all duties for two years, and reimpose them (the duties), as the abolition 'in a great measure deprives the English of the advantages which the tenor of the Royal Firmaun has ever entitled them to, above other merchants, and is certainly repugnant to their interest'; (4) to agree to the Council's proposition that the chiefs of the English factories would settle disputes between the Nawab's officers and the Company's servants, other English merchants and their agents; (5) to agree to the deputation of an English Resident at his Durbar; (6) to convert the districts of Burdwan, Midnapur, and Chittagong, which he had to farm to the Company under the treaty which secured him the Nawabship, into a *jagir* of the Company, that is, into its absolute ownership; (7) to issue orders to indigeneous bankers to accept the Company coins without discount, and to allow his mints at Dacca and Patna to coin three lakhs of rupees annually for the Company. In all eleven demands were made on the Nawab by the Amyatt commission.

In a spirit of assertiveness, attenuated and made mild by submission and surrender, the Nawab told Amyatt and Hay in a detailed reply: (1) 'An order is now going to my officers' annulling the arrangement to which Vansittart had agreed'; (2) 'I am ready to settle the loss that it can be proved the Company have suffered in their business through my officers,' adding, however, that for 'these two or three years' he had collected nothing from the custom, and paid for the 'officers out of my own pocket', and that 'your folks have proceeded against my officers, with

the utmost indignity, and carried them away into confinement'; (3) he would not agree to reimpose the custom, arguing 'I perceived there was no redress for me; and, on the contrary, I suffered the greatest indignities and insults from your hands'; therefore, 'for the sake of recovering your friendship; having no other remedy, I preferred my own loss, and have taken off all customs whatever'; (4) never before 'an office of this government' was 'brought before a chief of a factory, for settling any matter in my administration; if contrary to custom, you are purposed to overthrow my influence and authority in the countries of Bengal, &c. it is a means of destroying our friendship.... If ye are resolved to act contrary to all agreement, how will my authority and influence be kept there? And my officers being there, is altogether needless. Wherefore those places, whither you are to send chiefs, and to direct the administration of all causes, and the magistrature in such a manner, you ought first, to advise me of, for the removal of my officers, that I may call them thence, and deliver the business of the place into your hands; because, there being two rulers in the same district, the country and inhabitants are ruined and oppressed'; (5) 'Whenever we have agreed together, to our mutual satisfaction, there will be no necessity for your deputy remaining at my court, as a single letter for these two or three years past, has sufficed for every thing that has happened'; (6) 'In the treaty between us, as it shall have been mentioned, either for the expence of the Company's troops, or as a jagheer, I will perform accordingly'; (7) 'the Shroffs' (bankers) and 'merchants are no one's servants, but for the sake of a small profit, deal one with the other. Let every man of his own fancy buy and sell whatever he pleases, I shall interrupt no one.[16]

In the end, the Nawab said: 'At present it seems, as tho' you keep neither promise nor treaty for a single year, nay, a month or a day. Now that you have written and brought me these demands, what article of them rests upon me, that you require a public writing of me? I have not, by any means, broken my word; ye receded from your promise, and would again make a new treaty and agreement.' He gave them a plain paper to write thereon anything they liked, but made one demand: '...remove all English troops and seepoys wherever stationed.'[17] He was afraid lest he should be surprised in the manner his predecessor, Mir Jafar, was done; and it was in this state of mind that he detained

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 224-35. [17] *Ibid.*, pp. 234-5.

'some boats laden with arms', which had been sent from Calcutta 'for the English troops at Patna'. 'The Nabob,' says Vansittart, 'looking upon this as a fresh proof of our design to break with him, and naturally concluding that these arms were to be employed against himself, refused to part with them, unless our forces were removed from Patna.' Several times the Nawab turned down the demand for the release of the boats, making withdrawal of the English troops from Patna a pre-condition. But after five weeks, caution advised him to yield and he released the boats on 22 June. And this he did after he had been unequivocally told by Amyatt and Hay that the English troops 'shall never be removed' from Patna, and after he had received information from an officer of his government that the Patna factory chief, Ellis was, as he says in his letter to Vansittart dated 22 June, 'bent upon the design of assaulting the fort of Patna', and had constructed 'ladders and platforms, in order to take the fort'.[18] In the same letter, the Nawab said: 'I repeatedly wrote to you to release me from this business, and appoint another, but you did not even reply to me on this subject.' The Nawab was daily receiving reports from his men at Patna of warlike preparations being made by the English; they even protested that while danger was imminent, he was advising them that the differences with the English would be settled peacefully.

Amyatt and Hay had just then left the Nawab's headquarters at Munghyr, interpreting his disinclination to sign on the dotted lines as failure of their mission. As if they had gone on a mission of peace whose failure would inevitably lead to war, in the night of the 24th of June',[19] Ellis marched from the English factory with all the British troops he could collect, and attacked the Nawab's fort, 'whilst its people and its garrison were sleeping the sleep of profound trust and confidence'. Having been thus surprised, the Nawab's force was easily dispossessed of its arms and the city of Patna was taken possession of, with the exception of a large building, built of stone. This was announced, as Colonel Malleson comments, 'a great victory over men who had not fought'.[20] Flushed with their easy victory, the English troops moved into the town, and plundered the bazaars.

The loss of Patna put an end to the Nawab's patience, and he sent a force to recapture the town and re-establish his authority. After fighting bravely for a week, the English laid down their arms,

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 306-9. [19] *Ibid.*, p. 329.
[20] G. B. Malleson, *Decisive Battles of India*, p. 150.

with Ellis and some others surrendering to the Nawab's men to be made prisoner. On 28 June, while the fighting was still in progress but victory for the Nawab's army appeared certain, he sent a letter to the English Governor, protesting against the action of the English at Patna, and demanding compensation for the loss his subjects had suffered. He said:

> Like a night robber Ellis assaulted the Kella of Patna; robbed and plundered the bazar, and all the merchants and inhabitants of the city.... Since it was never my desire to injure the affairs of the Company, whatever loss may have been occasioned by this unhappy man to myself, in this tumult, I pass over: but you, gentlemen, must answer for any injury, which the Company's affairs have suffered; and since you have unjustly and cruelly ravaged the city, and destroyed the people, and plundered effects to the value of lacks of rupees; it bcomes the justice of the Company to make reparation to the poor, as formerly was done for Calcutta. You, gentlemen, are wonderful friends; having made a treaty, to which you pledged the name of Jesus Christ; you took from me a country, to pay the expences of your army, with the condition, that your troops should always attend me, and promote my affairs. In effect, you keep up a force for my destruction.'[21]

The Nawab also demanded from the Company (1) three years' rents for the three districts he had ceded under the 1760 treaty, contending that the revenues thereof that the English had collected, were to be utilised for an army for his defence, and not for his destruction; and (2) compensation for 'the violence and oppression exercised by the English Gomastahs for several years past... and the large sums extorted by them'. At the end of his letter, he said sarcastically: 'This is all the trouble you need take; in the same manner as you took Burdwan and the other lands, you must favor me in resigning them.'[22]

This letter once again opened the door for peaceful settlement of the affairs between the Nawab and the English, but any settlement in which the Nawab's wishes might have to be accommodated was repugnant to the then temper of the Fort William Council and factory chiefs. They therefore decided to mobilise all their resources and launch a vigorous action against the Nawab. Differences in the council no more divided the members; all members

[21] Vansittart, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 330-1. [22] *Ibid.*, p. 332.

were now to apply themselves to the supreme task of winning the war. 'Hitherto I had regarded the Nabob as the injured party,' says Vansittart, 'but justice must now give place to necessity, and I must take the part which my station required'.[23] The only scruple which he thought must still restrain him was that while he would 'assist in all the operations of the war', he would not take any part in the choice of Mir Kasim's successor.[24] There was, however, not much to be done in the choice, for a Nawab was already available in the person of Mir Jafar, who, after some negotiations over a new treaty proposed to be made with him, readily agreed to join the projected war and to use all his influence to collect men and material. Mir Kasim was at Munghyr, and at Murshidabad, Mir Jafar was proclaimed Nawab.

Mir Kasim, who had hardly enjoyed for a day the authority of his position, and who, being under restraint, could not raise an army for the defence of his territories, had now to make hurried preparations to meet an enemy who possessed a well-armed and disciplined force. In the first week of July 850 European and 1,500 Indian soldiers, under the command of Major John Adams, left Calcutta on their march towards Bihar. In the way, they were joined by Mir Jafar, and by the time they entered Bihar the English force had risen to 1,000 Europeans and 4,000 Indians. On its march towards Bihar, and then in that province, the English force met stiff resistance, and was kept engaged for four months, first by irregular troops of the Nawabs, and then by an army said to well-armed. By the end of October, the resistance had nearly completely collapsed, and the final decision was made on 6 November with the capture of Patna by the English force, and the flight of the Nawab into Oudh. In September, when the course of the war was, on the whole, favourable to the Nawab, he wrote to the British commandar Adams, protesting that for three months the latter's force had been 'laying waste the King's country', and threatening that if 'this business' continued, he would 'cutt off the heads of Mr. Ellis and the rest of the English chiefs'.[25] Some fifty Englishmen were then in the hands of the Nawab, but, as Vansittart says, the English bosses did not 'suspect him of a design, to make a wanton sacrifice of so many lives to his revenge', as he had 'never shewn any marks of a cruel disposition'.[26] The Nawab's letter which sought peace, though with a threat lest it should be taken as his weakness, brought forth this retort from Adams: 'It

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 316-17. [24] *Ibid.*, p. 318. [25] *Ibid.*, p. 369.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 370.

is true, you have Mr. Ellis, and many other gentlemen in your power; if a hair of their heads is hurt, you can have no title to mercy from the English, and you may depend upon the utmost fury of their resentment, and that they will pursue you to the utmost extremity of the earth.'[27] The war continued for another two months after the exchange of this correspondence, and when no doubt was left in the Nawab's mind that victory had gone out of his hand never to return, he had all the English prisoners put to death, leaving only one, named Fullarton, to narrate the account to Fort William. It was the most heinous crime of the war, after which the superiority of the English in Bengal, was established beyond question.

An unbiased vindication of the Nawab's conduct is to be found in Vansittart's Narrative which he wrote out sometime after the conclusion of the war; it was Vansittart who as Governor of Fort William presided over the operations against the Nawab. He says:

> No one instance can be produced of his (the Nawab) sending a man into any of the lands ceded to us, or molesting us in a single article of our commerce, till the contention which he was drawn into by the usurpations of our gomastahs, and our new claims with respect to our private trade; and even to the breaking out of the war, during the height of our disputes, the Company's business, in every part, went on without the least interruption, excepting one or two aggravated complaints of Mr. Ellis's concerning the salt-petre business.
>
> How different was the conduct of the gentlemen, who had formed themselves into a party against him! From the time of his advancement to the subahship, scarce a day passed, but occasion was taken from the most trifling pretences, to trample upon his government, to seize his officers, and to insult them with personal threats and invectives.... Yet for a long time he submitted to all his grievances, contenting himself with remonstrating against them, in the hopes, that it would be in my power, some time or other, to restore him to his authority.
>
> That we were the first aggressors, by the assault of the city of Patna will not be disputed.... Mr. Amyatt's negotiation had been broke off, because the Nabob saw, that whatever concessions he might make, would be rendered of no effect, by the preparations which Mr. Ellis was making to attack the city of Patna. I think, that had Mr. Ellis left the Nabob any hope of

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 374.

an accommodation, he would have consented to the terms which were demanded of him, and submitted to all the inconveniencies they would have laid him under, until justice could be done him by the Company.... Let any impartial person now put himself in the place of Meer Cossim, and say whether he could have regarded this assault on the city of Patna, in any other light than an act of treachery; and the strongest argument, that all the pacific declarations and proffered treaties, were only artifices to make him a dupe to our designs, and the instrument of his own ruin.

Meer Cossim had not to this time shewn any instance of a vicious, or a violent disposition; he could not be taxed with any act of cruelty to his own subjects, nor treachery to us. He had sense enough to know, that the English friendship would be his greatest security, and to dread their power, if ever they should come to be his enemies. As he perceived some of the Council were disinclined to him, he was the more cautious to avoid giving occasion of disputs; and as long as he saw I could support him against any direct insults, he suffered many affronts and encroachments upon his government with forbearance.

When the war broke out between us, altho' he wanted the courage to face his enemies in person, yet his soldiers fought for him with a bravery and fidelity rarely experienced in the undisciplined troops of Indostan; nor did any one of his officers, in the most distant part of his dominions, revolt from his authority to join us, till Patna was taken, and he was preparing to fly the province. This must be attributed to their affection for him.

On the murder of the English prisoners by the Nawab, Vansittart comments:

> This unhappy affair, even supposing him as culpable as he appeared to be at the time in which it was transacted, had many circumstances to extenuate the guilt of it, when put in comparison with the last dreadful effect of his resentment....His forces had been successively worsted; his country was wrested out of his hands; all his hoped of a reconciliation were for ever cut off by our new engagements with Meer Jaffier, and his reappointment to the subahship. He had no way to elude the danger which pressed upon him, but to fly for shelter into the dominions of the Nabob Shuja Dowla....His ruin he knew to be irretrievable, and a violent death the certain consequence

of ill success and lost power. A dreadful reverse of fortune in a man, who, but a few months before, saw himself master of the richest province of Indostan.... Fallen as Meer Cossim was to this state of desparation, it is no wonder that his temper broke all his former restraints, and gave a loose to that spirit of revenge, so common among his countrymen, and inculcated by their religion and education. In effect, the hoarded resentment of all the injuries which he had sustained in continual exertion of patience, during the three years of his government, from this time took entire possession of his mind, now rendered frantic by his natural timidity, and the frightful prospect before him; and drove from thence every other principle, till it had glutted itself with the blood of all within his reach, who had either contributed to his misfortunes, or by real or fancied connections with his enemies became obnoxious to his revenge.[28]

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 382-97.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

New Treaty with Mir Jafar: Repetition of Old Complaints

In the first week of July 1763, when Fort William was making preparation for the invasion of Bihar and had offered the Nawabship to Mir Jafar, the governing council proposed to him a new treaty, which required him (1) to vest in the Company, with full proprietory rights, and 'for ever', the three districts of Burdwan, Midnapur, and Chittagong; (2) exempt the English trade, both foreign and inland, of 'all duties, taxes and impositions, in all parts of the country, excepting the article of salt on which', a duty of two and a half per cent would be paid; (3) to grant to the company 'the exclusive right of purchasing the salt-petre of the province of Purniah'; (4) to agree to restrict his government's troops to '6,000 horse, and 12,000 effective foot', to be used only 'for the protection of his frontiers, and collection of his revenues'; (5) to agree to the stationing of 'a body of' the English 'forces', at the place of his court, and 'near his person'; (6) to withdraw the order by which Mir Kasim had granted to all merchants, Indian and English alike, 'exemption of all duties' for a period of two years, the exemption being 'destructive of the immunities enjoyed by the Company'; (7) to ensure acceptance of the rupee coins of the Calcutta mint 'throughout his government without any deduction'; (8) to 'defray all the expences and loss accruing to the Company from the war' with Mir Kasim, and to make good the losses the Company and individual merchants would suffer, in consequence of the war, from 'stoppage of their investment' and disturbance to their trade, the former being fixed at Rs. 30 lakhs, and the latter at Rs. 10 lakhs; (9) to 'assign' to the Company 'the revenues of certain lands for making good the sums stipulated', in the event of the invading English army not being 'so fortunate as to seize Cossim Allee Cawn's treasure and effects'. (The draft treaty provided that Mir Kasim's 'treasure and effects' would 'be put in possession' of Mir Jafar.)[1]

[1] *Bengal & Madras Papers,* Vansittart, vol. III, *op. cit.,* pp. 336-40.

Vansittart, consistently with the stand he had taken up throughout, expressed again his dissent over the proposed inclusion of inland trade in the privileges granted by the imperial *farman;* he said that the new demand was 'beyond the true intent and meaning of the Firmaun'[2] in whose name it had been put forward. Another member of the council, Warren Hastings, agreeing with Vansittart, expressed himself against all the new demands; he said, 'there is a manifest injustice and inconsistency, in exacting the Nawab's compliance with new terms, not mentioned in the original agreement with him'[3]—the one that was entered into in 1757. But Vansittart and Hastings were overruled by a majority.

When the draft treaty was taken to Mir Jafar, he offered some amendments, which, though not curtailing the new advantages sought by the English, were indicative of his consciousness that he had been approached at a difficult time, and that his little amendments would not be turned down. He objected to the three districts being 'invested in the Company for ever', arguing that (1) any future Nawab if he 'was inclined and able to dispute the Company's possession, might insist' that 'it was a cession' which was beyond the power of a Nawab to make, and (2) the Company would enjoy the advantage of absolute cession by appropriating the revenues 'for defraying the expences of the English army' as in the time of Mir Kasim. On three other articles his amendments were: (1) he would like to have half the produce of the Purniah salt-petre for the use of his own government; (2) his forces should be 12,000 horse and 12,000 foot, and 'in case of troubles', he should have the power to increase them 'with the consent of the Governor and Council' of Fort William; (3) he would not agree to English troops being stationed at his court, contending that this proposal 'implied a suspicion of his friendship and good intentions towards' the English, and that its implementation 'would be extremely prejudicial to his as well as' the Company's business.[4]

Fort William agreed 'unanimously' to the Nawab's amendments about cession, saltpetre, and his force; and 'thought it better not to insist upon' the last, namely stationing of English troops at his court, 'for fear of giving him distrust'. Distrust, it was felt, would prejudice joint action against Mir Kasim, and the council said: 'the present situation of affairs (which renders the Nabob's presence at the city, as soon as possible, absolutely necessary) will not admit of time being wasted in discussing further.'[5]

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 342. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 343. [4] *Ibid.*, pp. 356-7.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 357-8.

On 11 July 1763, the new treaty, incorporating the Nawab's amendments, was signed between him and the Company. At the time of signing, Mir Jafar, profiting by his past experience of the English, demanded certain assurances, one of which was that his re-accession to the Nawabship should be notified to the Company and the King of England, so that it might not be terminated by the present Fort William Council's successors. (In 1757, he rose to the Nawabship with the aid of Clive, and was removed by [Clive's successor] Vansittart.) The assurances he demanded were:

First, I formerly acquainted the Company with the particulars of my own affairs, and received from them repeated letters of encouragement with presents. I now make this request, that you will write in a proper manner to the Company, and also to the King of England, the particulars of our friendship and union; and procure for me writings of encouragement, that my mind may be assured from that quarter, that no breach may ever happen between me and the English; and that every Governor and Counsellor, and Chief, who are here, or may hereafter come, may be well disposed and attached to me.

Secondly, Since all the English gentlemen, assured of my friendly disposition to the Company, confirm me in the Nizamut; I request, that to whatever I may at any time write, they will give their credit and assent, nor regard the stories of designing men to my prejudice, that all my affairs may go on with success, and no occasion may arise for jealousy or ill-will between us.

Thirdly, Let no protection be given, by any of the English gentlemen, to any of my dependents, who may fly for shelter to Calcutta, or other of your districts; but let them be delivered up to me on demand.

Fourthly, From the neighbourhood of Calcutta to Hooghly, and many of the perganahs bordering upon each other, it happens, that on complaints being made, people go against the taalookdars, reiats, and tenants of my towns, to the prejudice of the business of the Sirkar; wherefore, let strict orders be given, that no peons be sent from Calcutta on the complaint of any one, upon my taalookdars or tenants; but on such occasions, let application be made to me, or the Naib of the fougedarree of Hoogly, that the country may be subject to no loss or devastation.

Fifthly, Whenever I may demand any forces from the Governor and Council for my assistance, let them be immediately sent

to me, and no demand made on me for their expences.[6]

These demands were readily agreed to by the council, and duly signed.

Another demand, which Mir Jafar had made when he was requested to become Nawab again, was that Nand Kumar would be employed by him as his principal officer 'to assist him in commencing and carrying on the business' of the government. Nand Kumar was then in confinement with the English, for allowing himself to be used, while 'living in Calcutta under the Company's protection', as 'the channel for carrying on a correspondence between the (French) Government of Pondichery, and the' Mughal Prince 'then at war with 'the English'. The demand aroused considerable misgiving and apprehension in the Council. Vansittart said Nand Kumar was 'a dangerous man, and not fit to be trusted'; and the Governor had, in this opinion, the majority of the council with him. But everybody believed that Mir Jafar would insist on Nand Kumar, and the Council, therefore, acceded to this request also.

Nevertheless, the treaty, exacted as it was from one who was virtually a prisoner of the English, provided for further ruin of Bengal. It was the English merchants' loot, violence, and oppression that had exacerbated the relations between Fort William and Mir Kasim; it was the inland trade which was at the root of this oppressive behaviour; it was Mir Kasim's insistence not to withdraw his order abolishing all levies on trade, which finally constituted the cause of the rupture between him and Fort William; it was the English who started the aggression; and yet the cost of war was charged, under the treaty, to Mir Jafar, and he was made responsible for the loss sustained, during the period of the war, by the English. The great distance between Calcutta and London, involving months of voyage, is responsible for several disasters, which, if the English Company's Court of Directors' orders had been received in time, would have been avoided. The war with Mir Kasim is one of them. On 8 February 1764, the Court of Directors, still believing that Mir Kasim was Nawab of Bengal and having received an account of the happenings caused by the English merchants' self-willedness and encroachment upon inland trade, despatched an order to their Governor and Council in Bengal, asking them to abandon forthwith the inland trade. They said:

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 363-6.

One great Source of the Disputes, Misunderstandings, and Difficulties, which have occurred with the Country Government, appears evidently to have taken its Rise from the unwarrantable and licentious Manner of carrying on the private Trade by the Company's Servants, their Gomastahs, Agents, and others, to the Prejudice of the Subah; both with respect to his Authority and the Revenues justly due to him. The diverting and taking from his natural Subjects the Trade in the Inland Parts of the Country, to which neither we, or any Persons whatever, dependant upon us, or under our Protection, have any Manner of Right; and consequently endangering the Company's very valuable Privileges; in order therefore to remedy all these Disorders, we do hereby positively order and direct; That from the Receipt of this Letter, a final and effectual End be forthwith put to the Inland Trade in Salt, Beetle Nut, Tobacco, and in all other Articles whatsoever, produced and consumed in the country; and that all European and other Agents, or Gomastahs, who have been concerned in such Trade, be immediately ordered down to Calcutta, and not suffered to return or be replaced as such, by any other Persons. That as our Phirmaund Privileges of being Duty free are certainly confined to the Company's Export and Import Trade only, you are to have recourse to, and keep within, the Liberty therein stipulated, and given, as nearly as can possibly be done....We are under the Necessity of giving the beforegoing Orders, in order to preserve the Tranquillity of the Country, and Harmony with the Nabob.[7]

The Court of Directors thus not only vindicated the stand persistently taken up by Vansittart, but also exposed the farcical majority in the Fort William Council, which, by mischievous interpretation of the Imperial *Farman*, had made the authority of the Company a machine for looting the helpless government and people of Bengal. In the above order, the court even disapproved of the arrangement Vansittart had made with Mir Kasim about inland trade. The Court observed:

> We cannot avoid in this Place, taking Notice of the Endeavours of President Vansittart, to form a Plan of Regulations, which, though it appeared so advantageous to Individuals, was strongly censured by the Majority of the Council, as not giving them,

[7] *Bengal & Madras Papers, 1757-1795,* vol. III. 'General Letters' to Bengal, 1764-7, pp. 29-30.

according to their Way of judging, a sufficient Scope for their unwarrantable Trade; however, we are satisfied of the President's good Intentions, but at the same Time, we say, it was not calculated so as to prevent future Misunderstandings with the Subah and his Government; because thereby an Inland Trade was to be admitted of; which, as has been before observed, would certainly be attended with constant Embroils and Difficulties.[8]

There can be no better authority than the above to warrant the conclusion that it was the diabolical conduct of the council which let those a reign of terror in Bengal, led to a war, and caused the loss of thousands of lives and millions of rupees. The court's orders reached Bengal on 13 July 1764, when Mir Jafar had already been in office for a year. The cause of disturbances—the inland trade—still remained, though 'legalised' by the new treaty, and the oppressive behaviour of the English merchants and their agents continued. The war and the preceding events left no lesson, and Mir Jafar was, says Vansittart 'no less clamorous upon these subjects, than Meer Cossim was'.[9] Even some chiefs of the English factories made complaints to their Governor, corroborating the Nawab's grievances. For example, George Gray, the chief at Malda, said, writing on 7 January 1764:

Since my arrival here, I have had an opportunity of seeing the villainous practices used by the Calcutta gomastahs in carrying on their business. The government have certainly too much reason to complain of their want of influence in their country, which is torn to pieces by a set of rascals, who in Calcutta walk about in rags, but when they are sent out on gomastahships, lord it over the country, imprisoning the reiats and merchants, and writing and talking in the most insolent, domineering manner to the fougedars and officers.[10]

And A. W. Senior, the chief at Kasimbazar, complained on 23 March 1764: 'It would amaze you, the number of complaints that daily come before me, of the extravagances committed by our agents and gomastahs, all over the country'.[11] Mir Jafar 'repeatedly declared to the Governor and Council ... that it was impossible for his government to subsist upon such a footing', and, in disgust, he proposed the same step which his predecessor, Mir Kasim, had

[8] *Ibid.* [9] Vansittart, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 409.
[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 412-3. [11] *Ibid.*, p. 413.

been obliged to take, namely abolition of all duties.[12] The proposal opened the threat of repetition of the old story, which culminated in war, and the council, wise after the event, 'resolved to ... give up the inland trade entirely' making an exception in the case of Patna and Kasimbazar factories to which salt and betel-nut would continue to be sent. European agents were forbidden 'to reside in the country,' and 'positive orders' were sent to the factories at Chittagong, Dacca and Lakhipur, 'to relinquish the salt works they had set up in prejudice of the country merchants'.[13] As Vansittart observes, 'if the same consideration had been' shown to Mir Kasim, 'he would have proved a faithful ally.'[14]

Whether for laxity in the enforcement of the resolution, or for the fact that it was not easy to neutralise, merely by issuing an order, the forces of disorder which had been growing all over the three provinces for several years, and which had all along been encouraged by the council, and legalised by a treaty, the inland trade continued, with its painful accompaniments.

Ignoring the authority of the Nawab and his officers, the English merchants tyrannised the people, seized their possessions, and compelled them to carry out their unlawful behests. The Nawab was a helpless onlooker; he could only complain to Fort William, and this he often did; he did it more grievously in September 1764. In a long letter he addressed to the Governor and Council of Fort William, he enumerated instances of English merchants and officers' oppressive conduct. He said: (1) the English officers had established their own market places—a market place was a source of revenue to the Nawab's government—and with the design of throwing those of his government into disuse, they carried by force the Indian merchants to the new places; (2) the English agents 'interrupted' the administration and 'prejudiced' state 'affairs' by giving 'protection to the dependants' of the government; (3) the men of the Kasimbazar factory had 'forcibly' taken possession of some villages, and did not even pay revenue dues; (4) the English agents compelled landlords and tenants to grow tobacco and other articles the English merchants needed, thus causing loss of revenue to the government; (5) 'The people of several Englishmen' had appropriated to themselves a monopoly of buying and selling rice and other grains in the market places, and prevented the government's officers from sending foodgrains to the army; (6) in Patna, the English had put themselves in possession of forty reception houses, depriving the Nawab, his family and

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 414. [13] *Ibid.*, p. 414. [14] *Ibid.*, p. 415.

his dependants of their use in case of need; in Purniah they had seized the wood farm, which yielded to the Nawab a tribute of Rs. 50,000 annually; (7) soldiers of the English force 'desolate the villages and put the ryots to flight by their disorders and oppressions'; and (8) 'The poor of this country, who used always to deal in salt, betel-nut and tobacco, &c. are now deprived of their daily bread by the trade of the Europeans'.[15]

Never was a complaint redressed, ever since the government of Bengal became subservient to the English Company, and it was idle to expect that the new ones would be attended to. On the contrary, Fort William's fresh demands made the Nawab more miserable. Under the treaty, he had been made responsible (1) to defray the expenses of war with Mir Kasim, which were fixed at Rs. 30 lakhs, and (2) to make good the losses the Company and individual merchants would suffer; these were fixed at Rs. 10 lakhs. The latter amount was later raised to Rs. 40 lakhs, and then to Rs. 48 lakhs. To the former was added another sum of Rs. 25 lakhs for payment to the men of army and navy over and above their regular emoluments. Once again Mir Jafar grumbles, without shirking his 'responsibility' to pay:

> What has been the state of my collections from Bengal and Behar ... is not unknown to you, gentlemen. The province of Behar has been entirely laid waste and ruined, and the affairs of Bengal also have been greatly injured. Forty lakhs of rupees have been appointed for the Company by way of gratuity and indemnification for the losses they sustained from Meer Cossim, and twenty-five lakhs have been granted to the King's and Company's troops, besides the expenses of my own troops, and restitution to the English merchants, and other dependants of the Company; these different articles amount to so considerable a sum that it must be a very difficult matter to discharge them from the revenues of such parts of Bengal as are in my possession; and besides my own necessary expenses, and the various charges of the Government are to be provided for out of these revenues. Accordingly it is written in the treaty made between us at the time of my appointment to the subadarry that besides the assigned lands you will not make any other demands for the expenses of your army, and that you will furnish me with as many troops as I may want....With respect to the restitution to the English merchants and others dependant on the Company,

[15] *Long's Selections,* pp. 356-8.

> I will not be negligent in this business, whereas you imagine it will amount to about forty lakhs of rupees, whatever may be determined by you, gentlemen, in Council, you will give me an account of the particulars, which when I have understood I will use my endeavours towards the discharge thereof, but the terms of payment shall be such that leisure may be allowed me.[16]

The Nawab, however, pleaded: 'You, gentlemen, know that in Colonel Clive's time, when the English merchants and other inhabitants of Calcutta delivered in their accounts of the losses they had sustained by the troubles with Seeraj-ul-Dowla, the Colonel deducted half the amount of the claims and caused the other half to be paid.'[17]

By this precedent, the Nawab believed, the demand of Rs. 40 lakhs would be halved. But the Nawab got a severe rebuff from Vansittart, who met him on behalf of the Council. What transpired between the English Governor and the Nawab is recorded thus in Fort William's Consultation, dated 10 September 1764:

> The President acquaints the Board further that in a visit he has since paid to the Nawab he represented both to him and his ministers the impropriety of the excuses he has made in his answer and the bad consequence which may attend further delays; that our demands are not made with a view to any advantage to the Company, but merely to assist the public service for his security and our own; that with respect to the restitution demand, he had with all care and diligence inspected every account, and though it would amount to a much larger sum than what we had mentioned, yet we had determined to reduce, and rest it upon that, but that the greatest part thereof should be paid in ready money and the rest in proportionate payments in the course of this year.[18]

The Nawab paid Rs. 10 lakhs in cash, and promised to discharge the balance in instalments. But the amount having been raised from Rs. 40 lakhs to 48 lakhs, the Nawab, in order to gain time, suggested that the settlement of the amount of losses, should be postponed until the arrival of Clive, whose appointment as Governor in place of Vansittart had already been announced and who was about to arrive in Bengal. The excuse did not prevail, and the council made a stern demand on the Nawab to make 'imme-

[16] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, pp. 12-3. [17] *Ibid.* [18] *Ibid*

diate payment' of another ten lakhs, and to discharge the remaining twenty-eight lakhs in four instalments in December 1764, and March, July and September 1765.[19]

Depositions and appointments of Nawabs, during the years of political supremacy of the English in Bengal, had been motivated mostly by private gains the principal servants of the Company made from them. They fabricated plausible excuses for contravening the orders of their masters and withheld from them the knowledge of private terms under which they received huge amounts of money from different Nawabs for themselves. In the case of the re-appointment of Mir Jafar to the Nawabship, it was from some letters the Duke of Albany had received from Bengal that the Directors came to know that the Nawab had been saddled with the obligation of paying them several heavy sums. It was said in those letters, to quote the Directors,

> ... that the present Nabob shall pay, over and above the thirty lacks for the Company, mentioned in that treaty, forty lacks by way of restitution, to make good the losses of private persons; besides twenty-five lacks to the army, and twelve lacks to the navy, not named in that treaty; making together the enormous sum of one hundred and seven lacks of rupees; which is above one million three hundred thousand pounds sterling.[20]

The Directors further said:

> The amazing sums demanded for restitution, in respect of losses sustained in this trade, have opened our eyes to the vast extent to which it has been carried; the oppressions of the unhappy natives, that have attended the carrying it on, and which have pervaded all parts of the Nabob's dominions, have convinced us, that a monopoly of the necessaries of life, in any hands whatever, more especially in the hands of the English, who are possessed of such an over-ruling influence, is liable to the greatest abuses.[21]

All the trouble in Bengal during the Nawabship of Mir Kasim arose mainly from the English encroachment upon the inland trade, and if an authority, whose decision was binding on the English in Bengal, declared that they had no right to deal in it, the responsibility for the evil consequences and losses that resulted from it

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 22. [20] *Ibid.*, General Letters, p. 31. [21] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

would be theirs. The Court of Directors unequivocally declared that under the imperial *farman* the English were not entitled to inland trade, and instructed the Fort William Council to withdraw from it. The following are the relevant excerpts from the Court's three letters:

> In our letters of the 8th February, and 1st June last, we gave you our Sentiments and Directions very fully, in respect to the inland trade of Bengal; we now enforce the same in the strongest manner, and positively insist, that you take no steps whatever towards renewing this trade, without our express leave; for which purpose you must not fail to give us the fullest information upon the subject, agreeable to our above mentioned directions.
>
> The enforcing our said orders is the more indispensably necessary, from our observing the complaints of the present Nabob, taken notice of and referred to, in your separate letter of the 20th February 1764, relating to the many difficulties, hardships, and oppressions he meets with, resulting from the before-mentioned unwarrantable and licentious trade.[22]
>
> (Letter dated 15 February 1765)
>
> The English in Bengal for these last four years ... have been guilty of violating treaties, of great oppression and a Combination to enrich themselves. We do not here mean to enter into a Discussion, respecting the political Conduct of our late Governor and Council; but must say, that an unbounded Thirst after Riches seems to have possessed the whole Body of our Servants to that Degree, that they have lost all Sight of Justice to the Country Government, and of their Duty to the Company. In reading the Opinions of the several Members of the late Council, respecting this illegal Trade, by which we mean, the Articles of Salt, Beetle Nut, and Tobacco, we are astonished to find those among them, who pretended to found their Right on the Phirmaunds. Treaties of Commerce are understood to be for mutual Benefit of the contracting Parties: Is it then possible to suppose that the Court of Delhi, by conferring the Privilege of trading free of Customs, could mean an Inland Trade, in the Commodities of their own country, at that Period unpractised and unthought of by the English, to the Detriment of their Revenues, and the Ruin of their own Merchants? We do not find such a Construction was ever heard of until our own Servants first invested it, and afterwards supported it by Violence. They ...

[22] *Ibid.*

used the Authority of the Company to obtain, by a Treaty exacted by Violence, a Sanction for a Trade to enrich themselves, without the least Regard or Advantage to the Company, whose Forces they employed to protect them in it.[22a]

(Letter dated 26 April 1765)

The vast Fortunes acquired in the Inland Trade have been obtained by a Scene of the most tyrannic and oppressive Conduct, that ever was known in any Age or Country; we have been uniform in our Sentiments and Orders on this subject.[23]

(Letter dated 17 May 1766)

The Fort William Council itself admitted (in its Consultation of 17 October 1764) that the inland trade had ruined the people of Bengal: 'The poor of this Country, who used always to deal in Salt, Beetle Nut, and Tobacco, are now deprived of their daily Bread by the Trade of the Europeans'.[24] But neither this realisation nor the Court of Directors' orders made an agreeable influence on the council, which continued, as the Court itself lamented (in its letter dated 17 May 1766), its 'defiance to those orders'.[25]

On 6 February 1765 occurred the death of Mir Jafar, which, as Hunter remarks, 'is said to have been hastened by the unseemly importunity with which the English at Calcutta pressed upon him their private claims to restitution'.[26] The late Nawab was succeeded by his son, Najm-ud-daula, who was naturally to be the nominee of the English, and had to enter into a new treaty with them prior to his accession. The fifth article of the treaty provided: 'I do ratify and confirm to the English the privileges granted them by their Phirmaund and several Husbulhookums, carrying on their Trade by means of their own Dustuck, free from all Duties, Taxes and Impositions, in all Parts of the Country, excepting in the article of salt, on which a duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent is to be levied.' This article again palpably defied the Court's order, and once again the Directors sternly protested:

> The fifth article is totally repugnant to our Orders ... in which we not only expressed our abhorrence ... but in positive terms directed you to form an equitable plan....As there is not the least Latitude given you for concluding any Treaty what-

[22a] *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31. [23] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 32 (Quoted in the Court of Directors' letter to Bengal dated 24 December 1765). [25] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[26] W. W. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Bengal*, vol. IX, p. 191.

soever respecting this Inland Trade, we must and do consider what you have done as an express Breach and Violation of our orders, and as a determined resolution to sacrifice the Interest of the Company, and the peace of the country, to lucrative and selfish views.[27]

The court also asked the Council to 'renounce' this part of the treaty, and convey the 'renunciation' to the Nawab 'in the Persian language'. The Directors carried their emphasis to the extent of saying that any Englishman found 'directly or indirectly guilty' of indulging in inland trade should 'be forthwith sent to England' so that they 'may proceed against him'.[28]

The Select Committee of the Company in London employed more emphatic expressions to prevail upon the Bengal Council:

> The opinions of the first lawyers in this Kingdom confirm our sentiments; and whenever we receive the list of the claims for restitution, we shall then with precision know whom we are to call to account for these ellicit practices. We are fully sensible that these innovations and illegal traffic laid the foundation of all the bloodshed, massacres, and confusion, which have happened of late years; we cannot suffer ourselves to inludge a thought towards the continuance of them, upon any conditions whatsoever.[29]

All these directions thoroughly vindicated Mir Kasim and absolved Mir Jafar of all responsibility for the payments which the treaty imposed on him and which were later enhanced arbitrarily by the Fort William Council. Yet the poor Nawab was not spared; he, in his turn, had to fleece his subjects to fill the English pockets.

[27] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, p. 33. [28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

English Victories in Oudh : Role of the Puppet Emperor

After his defeat, Mir Kasim had quitted Bihar and proceeded, with such of his loyal followers as, unlike others, did not go over to the English, and with the remnant of his army, to seek the Nawab of Oudh, Shuja-ud-daula's help in organising a more powerful attack on the English. Shuja-ud-daula not only possessed considerable resources for a war, but also enjoyed the privilege to wage it in the name of the emperor, who had been staying on in Oudh and whom Shuja-ud-daula, failing to mobilise adequate backing, could not yet carry to Delhi to put him on the throne of his ancestors. Shuja-ud-daula had been appointed Wazir (Prime Minister) of the empire by the titular emperor, and was styled as Nawab-Wazir.

But Mir Kasim's past conduct, while he was Nawab of Bengal, causing annoyance to Shuja-ud-daula, and the latter's gestures of a friendly disposition towards the English, repeatedly expressed after the latest revolution which reinstated Mir Jafar to the Nawabship, seemed to preclude the possibility of his design being accomplished. In 1762, Shuja-ud-daula, while fitting out an expedition against Hindupati, a powerful chief of Bundelkhand, had requested Fort William to assist him with a body of 1,000 European troops, some Indian soldiers and a few guns.[1] The request was followed by the emperor's authoritative letter to the English and by Shuja's personal letter to Mir Kasim, begging him to use his good offices. But Mir Kasim gave a contrary advice to the Fort William Government: 'As I see that Shuja-ud-daula is not well-disposed towards me, I therefore evade sending him any assistance, nor would I counsel you to send him any, because I am well-acquainted with his real disposition that his heart is full of enmity and ill-will.' Even if Mir Kasim had given a favourable advice, the English would have never liked to strengthen the hands of a

[1] *India Office Correspondence*, 1762, pp. 235-6; *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, vol. I, No. 1622.

ruler, who, for a long time, harboured an aspiration to annex the territories of Bengal to his dominion, with whose help Shah Alam had repeatedly invaded Bihar, and whose designs had been frustrated. The English Governor, Vansittart, did not reject the request outright, but expressing loyalty and attachment to the emperor, said that he would consult Mir Kasim on the emperor's errand. A second request from Shuja-ud-daula was similarly put off.

In August 1763, Shuja-ud-daula, then camping at Allahabad with Shah Alam, offered to help the English in their war with Mir Kasim, but the English, perhaps rightly interpreting the offer as the Nawab-Wazir's excuse to meddle in the affairs of Bengal, wrote back saying that they did not need his assistance and were powerful enough to deal with Mir Kasim. A month or two before the final collapse of Mir Kasim's resistance, that Nawab had despatched an envoy, named Mirza Shams-ud-din to Shuja-ud-daula begging his assistance; the Mirza carried considerable amounts of money with him, and made a present of Rs. 17 lakhs to the Nawab-Wazir, Rs. 10 lakhs to the emperor, and quite a big sum to the principal men of the Oudh Court. But Shuja-ud-daula did not deviate from his profession of friendship towards the English; he was afraid of jumping into a hazardous alliance, and swallowed the money without discharging the obligation it imposed on him. Nay, while Mir Kasim was moving into Oudh to establish contact with Shuja-ud-daula, the latter and Shah Alam were anxiously repeating the profession in their letters to the English, and Fort William was reciprocating with similar 'sentiments'.[2] But in order to obviate the possibility of the combined might of Shuja-ud-daula and Mir Kasim invading Bihar in the future, the English demanded of the Nawab-Wazir and the emperor to deliver up the fugitive Nawab to them, or at any rate to strip him of his fighting power. How they looked at the situation is expressed in the following paragraph of their letter of instructions to Major John Carnac (dated 2 February 1764), commander-in-chief of their forces in Bihar:

> From the disposition which the King and Shuja Dowla have expressed in their late letters to us, and the answer which we wrote them, we are in hopes they may determine to surrender Cossim Aly Cawn into our hands or at least, by stripping him

[2] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.,* (Proceedings of the Committee appointed for the administration of Bengal, 1763-64, p. 1.)

of his wealth, and obliging him to disband his forces put it out of his power to give us any further disturbance. But if contrary to our expectations they should resolve to join the fortunes of Cossim Aly Cawn, and march with their forces towards Bengal, we desire you will advance the army to the banks of the Carumnassa, and oppose and prevent any enemies from entering the country.[3]

At the Oudh Court, the English had, in the person of one Shitab Rai, a watchman of their interests. Shitab Rai was once Diwan of Bihar; during the Nawabship of Mir Kasim, he happened to incur the Nawab's displeasure, and had taken service under the Nawab-Wazir. As early as October 1763, when he heard of Mir Kasim's agent making overtures of help to Shuja-ud-daula, he, at his own initiative, opened negotiations for the recognition by the Emperor of Mir Jafar as Nawab of Bengal. Should this plan work, Shitab Rai believed, he would frustrate all chances of the Nawab-Wazir lending support to Mir Kasim. He contacted the English army authorities and Mir Jafar at Patna, secured a formal petition from the latter, and submitted it to Shuja-ud-daula's minister, Beni Bahadur. Beni Bahadur, an unlettered man, whose vanity happened to be injured by Mir Kasim's agent by incidentally ignoring him when that agent came to seek Shuja's help, readily promised to back up the petition. A *nazrana* (present) of Rs. 5 lakhs, according to the usual custom, was sent along with the petition, but the Nawab-Wazir additionally demanded an undertaking from Mir Jafar that the emperor's tribute should be regularly paid to him from the revenues of Bengal. Mir Jafar agreed, and the documents formally recognising him as Nawab of Bengal, were issued, at the instance and with the approval of Shuja-ud-daula, who thus provided another proof of his agreement with the consequences of the revolution in Bengal.

But Shitab Rai did not know that his action was contravening the intentions of the Fort William Council, who did not wholly trust the professions of Shuja-ud-daula, and did not want to encourage any proceeding which would have the effect of augmenting his resources. If they did not curb Mir Jafar's eagerness for the imperial *sanad*, it was because they could not afford to antagonise him at a trying time. But they looked upon this development as one calling for greater precaution, and alerted the commanding officer of their army in Bihar.[4] With some concern, they

[3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

wrote to Carnac in their letter dated 2 February (cited above):

> We are sorry to find that notwithstanding our council he (Mir Jafar) ... has actually executed an agreement to pay to the King 28 lacks of rupees annually with 5 lacks nuzerana with a view of obtaining these sanads, and that he is seeking means to remit above one-half of that sum immediately to Court ... And we cannot help repeating here, that we think this step of the Nabob's a mark of bad policy and great imprudence, for making remittances to the King can only be considered as supplying the finances of Shuja Dowla who seeks but an opportunity of invading and molesting his (the Nabob's) Government; nay, is perhaps at this very period become his open and declared enemy.[5]

They instructed Carnac to tell Mir Jafar that 'a more proper time to apply for' the sanad would be 'when all parts of the country have testified a firm allegiance to his Government, and he has been fully established in his dominion'.[6] But Mir Jafar insisted, and his insistence was allowed to prevail by the English army authorities on the border who had been influenced by Shitab Rai's communications.

While Mir Jafar's petition was still pending disposal with Shuja-ud-daula, Mir Kasim had arrived (January 1764) and been received with sympathy and cordiality by the Nawab-Wazir. But when Mir Kasim urged that the English should not be given time to consolidate their position in Bengal, Shuja-ud-daula was thinking of sending out a third expedition against Hindupati of Bundelkhand, and told the ex-Nawab that it was his ardent desire to subjugate that ruler first. As if the war against Hindupati was a test, Mir Kasim volunteered himself for it, and putting all his forces at the disposal of Beni Bahadur who headed the expedition, Mir Kasim himself took the field. He advanced ahead of Beni Bahadur, and was crowned with victory.

But while Mir Kasim was engaged in Shuja-ud-daula's affair in Bundelkhand, the latter revived consideration of Mir Jafar's petition, prepared the *sanad,* and with the Emperor's seal and signatures, despatched it through Shitab Rai's son, Kalyan Singh. It was delivered to Mir Jafar on 24 March 1764 at Buxar. When Mir Kasim returned from the Bundelkhand expedition, and came to know of the transaction, he was unnerved, and placing his

[5] *Ibid.,* pp. 1-2. [6] *Ibid.*

turban on Shuja-ud-daula's feet, begged of him to annual the *sanad*. It is hardly imaginable that Mir Kasim's mortification affected the Nawab-Wazir so powerfully that all of a sudden he changed his mind and became ready to scrap all his professions and commitments. Nevertheless, he gave word to Mir Kasim that he and the emperor would join hands with him. This, as the finale of a series of dramatic performances of the Nawab-Wazir, the latest being the grant of the *sanad*, would naturally appear somewhat surprising, and calls for an answer. What was the consideration that impelled him to make friendly gestures to the English from time to time? The answer apparently is his consciousness of their superiority as a fighting power. But Mir Kasim's victory over the obstinate Bundela chief must have assured the Nawab-Wazir that the ex-Bengal ruler had in his possession a strong and dependable force, and that this and his own would constitute more than a match to the English troops. What now remained was the purpose for which Shuja-ud-daula should enter the war. To this question, the answer was provided by Mir Kasim undertaking to cede the province of Bihar to Shuja-ud-daula, together with whatever treasure might be found in that province. He also undertook to defray the expenses of the Oudh army at the rate of eleven lakhs of rupees per month. He is also said to have agreed to pay to the Nawab-Wazir a lump sum of Rs. 30 million on the successful conclusion of the war. (The cash and jewellery in possession of Mir Kasim, while he was in Oudh, was estimated at Rs. 100 million.)

In Shitab Rai the English had a trustworthy spy, and he was communicating to them information of every new development at the Oudh Court. In the middle of March (1764) he sent word saying, 'it appears ... that Shujauddaula designs to march towards Behar'.[7] On 28 March, he wrote: 'Mir Qasim is collecting an immense force.'[8] In his despatch dated 30 March, he said: 'The Wazir has joined Mir Qasim and gone to Allahabad.'[9] 8 April 1764: 'Mir Qasim has promised to defray the expenses of their (*the King's and the Wazir's*) armies.'[10] Shitab Rai must have been spending a good deal of money on messengers, and employing ciphers to make sure that he remained safe in case of seizure of his messages.

Sometime in March, the allied armies, headed by the Nawab-

[7] *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, vol. I, p. 291, No. 2114.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 293, No. 2124. [9] *Ibid.*, p. 294, No. 2133.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 296, No. 2151.

Wazir, set out for Bihar, and, the Oudh-Bihar border being undefended then, marched into that Province without any opposition, and occupied quite a large territory. It was from his camp in Bihar that Shuja-ud-daula served on the Governor and Council of Fort William an ultimatum, in his capacity as Prime Minister of the Emperor, who was with him. The ultimatum, which reached Calcutta on 25 April 1764, said:

> Former Kings of Hindustan by exempting the English Company from duties, granting them different settlements and assisting them in all their affairs, bestowed greater kindness and honour upon them than either upon the country merchants or any other Europeans. Moreover of late His Majesty has graciously conferred on you higher titles and dignities than was proper, and jagheers and other favours. Since notwithstanding these various favors which have been shown you you have interefered in the King's country, possessed yourselves of districts belonging to the Government, such as Burdwan and Chittagong, &c., and turned out and established Nabobs at pleasure without the consent of the Imperial Court; since you have imprisoned dependents of the Court, and exposed the Government of the King of Kings to contempt and dishonour; since you have ruined the trade of the merchants of the country, granted protection to the King's servants, injured the revenues of the Imperial Court and crushed the inhabitants by your acts of violence and oppression, and since you are continually sending fresh people from Calcutta and invading different parts of the royal dominions, and have even plundered several villages and purgunnas belonging to the province of Illabad, to what can all these your proceedings be attributed but to an absolute disregard for the Court and wicked design of seizing the country for yourselves; if you have behaved in this manner in consequence of your King's commands or the Company's directions, be pleased to acquaint me of the particulars thereof that I may show a suitable resentment. But if these disturbances have arisen from your own improper desires, desist from such behaviour in future, interfere not in the affairs of the Government, withdraw your people from every part and send them to their own country, carry on the Company's trade as formerly, and confine yourselves to commercial affairs. In this case the Imperial Court will more than ever assist you in your business and confer its favours upon you. Send hither some person of distinction as your Vackeel to inform me properly of

all circumstances that I may act accordingly. If (which God forbid) you are haughty and disobedient, the heads of the disturbers shall be devoured by the sword of justice, and you will feel the weight of His Majesty's displeasure which is the type of the wrath of God, nor will any submission or acknowledgments of your neglect hereafter avail you. As your Company has of old been supported by the royal favours, I have therefore wrote to you. You will act as you may think advisable.[11]

The English had a cogent case to counter all the allegations Shuja-ud-daula had hurled at them. Mir Jafar's first appointment to the Nawabship of Bengal, after the treacherous drama at Plassey, had been duly approved by the then Emperor of Delhi; the English had secured similar approval from the present emperor for Mir Kasim in 1761; and again, Mir Jafar, as already stated, had been awarded a *sanad* confirming his second appointment. Shuja-ud-daula's ultimatum made absolutely no case for the emperor's intervention in the affairs of Bengal. The Fort William Council refused to treat Shuja-ud-daula's letter as an ultimatum from the Emperor, and decided that, in the reply to be sent to him, he should be addressed as Nawab, and not as Prime Minister. The council made the following reply:

The English have been always faithfully attached to the Kings of Hindustan and sensible of the favors they have bestowed upon them, and they were moreover the first to acknowledge the present King Shah Allum, who on his part has frequently expressed a dependence on the English above all others, and might have benefited by their assistance had he not unfortunately fallen into your hands. Instead of asserting the King's rights when you received him from us, and proceeding to put him in possession of his capital, you have detained him ever since in a kind of slavery, and made use of his name to carry on your own ambitious and unjust designs on the rights of others. We have still the strongest proofs of the King's affection and regard for us, and that it is entirely contrary to his inclination and without his authority that you are advancing towards these provinces. With respect to what you write, that we have interfered in the King's country, and turned out and established Nabobs at pleasure, without the consent of the Imperial Court, you yourself in a former letter express the highest approbation and

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

applause of our deposing Meer Cossim and supporting the Nabob Meer Jaffur, and as a proof of the King's approbation of our conduct he has graciously confirmed the said Nabob by his Imperial sunnud in the Subadarey. In the same letters you revile Meer Cossim for his tyrannies and oppressions, and meanly sue for our assistance against him. Now that, forgetting your former declarations, you join with a tyrant and oppressor against us, in what light can we regard you but as an abettor and a partner in his murders and oppressions. Since your conduct has proved so inconsistent and unworthy of the rank you hold, and notwithstanding the warning we have given you, you still persist in your designs upon these provinces, we are resolved for the future to answer your threats only by the force of our arms, nor shall we desist till we have amply revenged ourselves of the injuries which you have done us and given the world this fresh proof that as the English will never injure others so none shall dare to attack them with impunity.

This will not only be a justice to ourselves, but by the blessing of God will be a means of rescuing the King from the bondage in which you have impiously detained him and putting it in his power to resume the throne of his ancestors.[12]

What the English wrote to Shuja-ud-daula about the Emperor was no mere cant. Several weeks before the Nawab-Wazir's letter reached Fort William, the English president and council had received separate confidential letters from Shah Alam assuring them 'that the resolution for marching to Bengal in support of Meer Cossim is by no means agreeable to him, that he is unable of himself to prevent it'.[13] The English spy, Shitab Rai, betraying his master, Shuja-ud-daula, had also communicated to the English the Emperor's attitude to the war, and 'that the Vizier has suffered himself to be deluded by Meer Cossim's promises of money and yielded to his solicitations.' Shitab Rai had further 'assured' the English 'that he shall not fail to exert his utmost endeavours for' their 'service.'[14] In another letter, the Emperor had informed the English that should the English agree to defray his expenses, he would part company with Shuja-ud-daula and march away to Delhi.[15] After the receipt of Shuja-ud-daula's ultimatum and their reply to it, the Fort William authorities instructed Major Carnac

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 12 (Fort William Consultation, dated 3 April 1764).
[14] *Ibid.* [15] *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, vol. I, pp. 2134-5.

to do all he could to 'effect release' of the King and give him 'all the encouragement'.[16] But this could not be done, and the unwilling emperor remained with Shuja-ud-daula, ostensibly leading the invading army.

The invaders numbered about 40,000, of whom not more than 12,000 were regular troops. The forces under the English amounted to 19,000 strong, which were made up of 12,000 men of Mir Jafar's army, and about 1,000 Europeans and 6,000 Indians of the English army, all well trained and disciplined. The English commander-in-chief, Carnac, was advised by the Fort William Council to take up the offensive, in accordance with their tried policy which had invariably brought them success. Carnac reached Buxar on 17 March 1764 (when the invaders were yet on the other side of Benares), and was to proceed with his forces to the border of Bihar to launch the offensive, but just when Shuja's forces were crossing into the province, he (the Major) made a backward move. This sudden step, purporting to be a defiance of the orders of the Council, was partly due to lack of 'money and grain', with which Mir Jafar had failed to provide him,[17] and partly to his ill-conceived strategy. Carnac's withdrawal enabled Shuja-ud-daula to march, without having to face any resistance, up to the close proximity of the city of Patna. He set up his encampment in the village of Phulwari, seven miles west of Patna, and intended to pass some days there studying the enemy's disposition and plan of defence. But the information that the British Marines would soon be arriving on the front to reinforce Carnac, precipitated his action. With the Emperor who had no interest in the war, with Mir Kasim, whose initiative had been blunted by the Nawab-Wazir arrogating to himself all power of making decisions relating to policy and strategy, with Beni Bahadur who had grown very intimate with Shitab Rai, and with the ruler of Benares, Balwant Singh, who was a half-hearted ally, Shuja-ud-daula proceeded to make war upon the English. The battle was fought at Panch-Pahari, in the neighbourhood of Patna on 3 May 1764. The first few engagements were encouraging to the invaders, but in the afternoon the hope began to wither away, and in spite of remarkable bravery Shuja-ud-daula and his army displayed, they had to withdraw. For about a month he continued his camp in the vicinity of Patna, and then, by slow withdrawals, he returned to Buxar, deciding to stay there until the rains were over, and to utilise the intervening

[16] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, p. 17.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

period in negotiations for peace, and in making preparations for a fresh offensive.

But Buxar was to spell the beginning of his doom. On 12 may, while still at Phulwari, he communicated a message to Mir Jafar, sympathising with his lot under the English and advising him to surrender and make peace. But the message made a proposal which was bound to create the contrary effect. It said:

> Now that His Majesty has bestowed these provinces upon my son Ausuph-ud-doula, who is your nephew, look upon yourself as the rightful manager of all the affairs of the Government and deliver it from the daily insults to which it is exposed. Affairs shall not remain upon their present footing, nor shall the hand of any one be upon you. The districts which belong to the English I will get confirmed to them by the King in case of their faithful obedience and attachment.[18]

To propose that Mir Jafar would be reduced from the Nawabship to the managership of Bengal, and still to expect that he would respond to the overtures, shows Shuja's utter lack of knowledge of the human nature. Mir Jafar turned down the proposal, and demanded Mir Kasim to be delivered to him as a precondition to any negotiation for peace. Shuja's letter to Mir Jafar was followed by dozens of letters from the emperor, Shuja-ud-daula himself, and his principal officers; they were addressed to the English army chief, and sought a peace treaty to be concluded. All these letters gave the English the positive impression that 'Shuja Dowla, finding himself deceived in the fond hopes he had entertained of carrying all before him, has evidently for some time past wanted to introduce a negotiation, in order that he might go back and yet save his credit'.[19] The English made the same answer as Mir Jafar had done at their instance. The Emperor, who was eager for peace at any cost, sent word that their wish would be done. Shuja-ud-daula also replied to the same effect without, however, meaning it. The correspondence between the two camps dragged on for several months; Shuja-ud-daula thought he was gaining time, little knowing that the interval would be utilised by the English to create dissension and disloyalty among his men.

Major Hector Munro (who had taken over the command from

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 26 (Fort William Consultation, dated 11 June 1764: precis of Carnac's letter).

Carnac on 12 August), soon after his arrival in Bihar, opened correspondence with the Mughal officers in Shuja-ud-daula's army, through some partisans in the pay or favour of the English, with a view to buying off their loyalty. The Mughal officers had under their command five to six thousand troops, and the desertion by such a large number, Munro rightly thought, would by itself unnerve Shuja-ud-daula and compel him to agree to the dictated peace terms. The terms—rates of salary, etc.—demanded by the Mughals, were not, however fully acceptable to the English, and the negotiations broke down. But one Mughal officer, Asad Khan, agreed to the revised terms, and went over to Munro with the force under his command.[20] Another army officer, Zain-ul-Abdin, contacted by Asad Khan, also succumbed to the temptation. He tries to justify his self-deceived conscience thus, in his response to Munro's invitation:

> I have had the honor to receive by the means of Ussud Khan Bahadre your friendly letter expressing your desire that I should join you with as many able-bodied and well-mounted horsemen, Moguls, Tooranies, as I can.
>
> Sir, although it is very dishonorable to all men, particularly to persons of family, to desert the service they are enagaged in, and go over to their master's enemies, yet there are several circumstances which justify such a conduct in us. For instance, Shuja-ul-dowla, notwithstanding his oath upon the Koran, murdered the Nabob Mahomed Cooly Khan....The assisting and supporting of such an oppressor is neither conformable to reason, nor to the Koran, nor to the rules of any religion, and the quitting his service can reflect no dishonour upon any one, either in the sight of God or man.[21]

Ghulam Hussain Khan, the author of the well-known work of contemporary history, *Seir-ul-Mutakharin*, and his father were in the employ of Shuja-ud-daula, but both, responding to the alluring offers from the enemy, turned traitors. Ghulam Husain explains his conduct thus in his book:

> I resolved to attach myself to the English, for whom I had this long while conceived an affection. I had even some connections with them, especially with Doctor Fullarton....Some corres-

[20] *Calendar of Persian Correspondence,* vol. I, pp. 2423-32.
[21] Long, *op. cit.*, pp. 358-9.

pondence had also subsisted between him and me; and it was by that means he had informed me that the Emperor was inclined to the English party in his heart. He had likewise advised me early to provide for myself and for that Prince's reaching the English camp. This intelligence I imparted to my father, and I exhorted him to take the lead in an affair that would establish our family, and entitle him to the gratitude of the nation. I added that it was evident that so long as the Vazir continued to command such unruly troops, and to be at variance with his confederates, as well as to turn a deaf ear to every sober advice, he would not be likely to prevail against the English; that matters standing in such a predicament, it would be advantageous to join a nation that seemed to entertain a veneration for the Imperial person, and an inclination for its interests, both of which they expressed everywhere in their correspondence with me, in such a manner, as rendered it proper and expedient for that Prince to write to the ruler of that nation, such a letter as they seemed to wish for.[22]

Men closer to the Nawab-Wazir in feigning loyalty to him did not lag behind in making their contribution to the treachery. Shitab Rai's son, Kalyan Singh, who had distinguished himself in concluding negotiations for the grant of the *sanad* to Mir Jafar, sent a special messenger, (to quote his own words), 'to give assurance to the English officials and Mir Muhammad Jafar Khan that I was with them and was on the look-out to find an opportunity to turn the tide in their favour'.[23] Shitab Rai's treachery (in which his son collaborated) was motivated by the aspiration that the English victory would again get him the position of a minister in the government of Bihar, besides other gains. There is no positive evidence against Shuja-ud-daula's minister, Beni Bahadur, but his conduct does not appear to be wholly above suspicion. He had been constantly advising his master to make peace with the English, and after the later war at Buxar had worsted the Nawab-Wazir and the fulfilment of the English terms was demanded of him, Beni Bahadur 'told' Munro 'that if the Vizier did not make peace, he would leave him, and be at the disposal of the King and the English'.[24] Beni Bahadur's indifference and inertness at the

[22] Ghulam Husain Khan, *Seir-ul-Mutakherin,* vol. II, p. 536.
[23] *J. B. & O. R. S.,* vol. VI, pp. 148-9.
[24] *Bengal & Madras Papers, ibid.,* p. 29. (Hector Munro's letter dated 22 November 1764 to Government Vansittart.)

battle of 3 May aroused suspicion of his loyalty. In March 1765, while the Nawab-Wazir was organising, in his own dominions, resistance to the English, Beni Bahadur went over to the English 'with a large body of troops' and was put (by them) in charge of the province of Oudh. At the battle of Buxar also, he did not acquit himself convincingly, and had fled with the forces under him. Similarly the conduct of Balwant Singh, the ruler of Benares, who was one of the principal allies of Shuja-ud-daula, does not appear to be free from suspicion. The Fort William papers record about him that he played 'double part in the beginning of the war'.[25]

As if these tamperings and the Panch-Pahari debacle were not enough, Shuja-ud-daula made his final defeat doubly certain by the horrid treatment he meted out to Mir Kasim. Mir Kasim was not a general ; even in his war with the English in 1763, the command was in the hands of his army officers, while he stayed away in his camp at some distance. At Panch-Pahari, he took the field, but being unable to give proof of his prowess, he excited a dislike for him in the mind of Shuja-ud-daula, who began to feel that he (Mir Kasim) could be done away with without any adverse consequence. During the few months the two were together, their personal relations had also been impaired and Shuja-ud-daula had made up his mind to dispossess Mir Kasim of his stupendous wealth and to disgrace him. He thought of a specious excuse to put his avaricious design into effect. He sent a messenger to Mir Kasim accusing him of failure to pay the Emperor's share from the revenues of Bengal during his tenure of Nawabship and demanding immediate payment of the arrears amounting to Rs. 4 crores. While this demand was hanging on the head of Mir Kasim, Shuja-ud-daula quietly managed to buy off the former's principal men in the army. Thus weakened, Mir Kasim was easily made a helpless victim. One morning (in the middle of August 1764) the Oudh troops surrounded his camp, and took him prisoner to the Nawab-Wazir. All the cash and jewellery in the camp were seized ; he would have been reduced to destitution had he not prudently removed a little while earlier some of his possessions and sent them to Delhi. After a brief period of imprisonment, Mir Kasim was released and allowed to go wherever he liked. Destiny came to his aid and removed him in good time from the disaster, which awaited his victimiser at

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 20 (The Fort William Consultation, dated 6 November 1764 —letter to Munro).

Buxar and which might have thrown him into the hands of the English.

The first fruit of Shuja-ud-daula's disdainful deed and the traitorous proceedings in his camp came from Rohtas-Garh. Sahumal, Governor of the fort of Rohtas, still possed a fund of good will for Mir Kasim, and sandwiched as he just then was between two manoeuvres—the English and Shuja-ud-daula—both desiring to occupy his strategic position, he had to make a decision quickly, and he did so in favour of the former. The English engaged historian Ghulam Husain Khan to impress on the mind of Sahumal that the superiority of their arms would ultimately prevail and that the Rohtas-Garh governor's interests would be safe in their hands. 'Major Munro... had wrote me', says Ghulam Husain, 'by the channel of Doctor Fullaraton, that if I could contrive to put the fortress of Rohotas in the hands of the English, I would entitle myself to their friendship and gratitude.' And this is what he did to earn their 'gratitude' : 'Upon this intimation I applied to Raja Sahomul, a man who had the greatest obligations to our family... I informed him that it was not in the nature of things that the English should not prevail shortly, and shortly should not overthrow and ruin the Vezir, and his confederates ; that it was incumbent upon him therefore to examine the respective circumstances of both parties and to take the resolution be times.' Sahumal was influenced by the plausible advocacy of Ghulam Hussain, and handed over the fort upon certain conditions, none of which, the historian himself complains, was 'observed' by the English.[26]

Shuja-ud-daula cannot escape the guilt of robbing and disgracing one whom he had accepted as his ally ; yet he has earned for himself a place of honour by persistently refusing to comply with the English demand to deliver Mir Kasim to them. The exigency of his situation might, however, be interpreted as suggesting that the title to the honour cannot be wholly vindicated. Before the Kasim Ali incident was enacted, Shuja-ud-daula had cleverly separated from Mir Kasim's force the small party of European troops whom the English called deserters. One of the Europeans (not a deserter) was a French commandant, Sumro, who was with Mir Kasim in the 1763 war with the English, and who had given a commendable account of himself. After Mir Kasim had been fleeced and imprisoned, Shuja-ud-daula re-opened correspondence for peace, telling the English that the ex-Nawab of

[26] Ghulam Husain Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 5534.

Bengal had been punished and that they should now consider their wish as duly satisfied. But the English reiterated that Mir Kasim, Sumro, and all the deserters must be delivered; the last letter of the Fort William Council (12 September 1764) told Shuja-ud-daula that if he would 'be kind enough' to comply with this demand and withdraw from Bihar, 'we shall be fully satisfied'.[27] Sumro, according to the information conveyed to the English, had carried out, at the bidding of Mir Kasim, the execution of the English prisoners (of the 1763 war); and the deserters were accused of inciting mutiny among British troops. These men had become an important part of Shuja-ud-daula's war machine, and he could not afford to deliver them to the English. Therefore the delivery of Mir Kasim alone, even if Shuja's conscience permitted the betrayal, would not have satisfied the English. But there is nothing on record anywhere to suggest that Shuja-ud-daula ever entertained an intention of making the person of Mir Kasim a point for bargain.

The ambition which had persuaded Shuja-ud-daula to lend his alliance to Mir Kasim and fight his battle was to annex Bihar which had been promised to him by the latter as a reward of victory. The ambition remained even after the debacle of Panch-Pahari and after the exit of Mir Kasim, and Shuja-ud-daula demanded of the English, in his reply to their last letter, to surrender Bihar to him and undertake to make regular payment of the Emperor's tribute. The wording of this demand bore the likeness of his previous ultimatum: he told them that they should look upon the proposal as a heaven-sent blessing, and if they would not accept it, 'whatever is the will of God will be done'.[28]

This was the end of the peace talks, and the Fort William authorities sent out orders to Munro not to delay the offensive and to bring the war to a speedy conclusion. As Shuja-ud-daula thought that the only use he could make of Mir Kasim was to acquire his wealth for the Oudh treasury and for the prosecution of the war, so did the English in the case of Mir Jafar. His presence in Bihar was considered by the English commander-in-chief as a liability rather than an asset to the prosecution of the war. He was, therefore, called to Calcutta early in September and required, under pain of 'bad consequence' to pay without 'further delays' Rs. 40 lakhs as compensation to English merchants and undertake to pay Rs. 5 lakhs every month until the war lasted; army expenses,

[27] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, p. 14.
[28] *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, vol. I, pp. 2443-7.

he was told, now exceeded the revenues of the districts he had assigned to the Company. Disagreement was out of the question, and Mir Jafar said: 'I agree that for the space of three or four months I will by every means in my power borrow and supply you with the sum of four lakhs of rupees per month'.[29] The forces under the English were reported to be in want of money and supplies; free flow of these was now assured, and on 9 October 1764, Munro set out with his army from Patna to meet his adversary at Buxar.

The battle of Buxar was fought on 23 October and within three hours of keen contest, in which the Oudh Nawab's forces pushed back the enemy several times, the decision was made in favour of the English. From English commanders' accounts of the battle, an inference suggests itself: the treacherous activities in the Nawab-Wazir's camp could not succeed so well as to enact a Plassey at Buxar. For example, Lieutenant Harper observed: 'I fancy had one or two thousand of the enemy's cavalry behaved as well as those few that attacked the grenadiers, we should have lost the day.... The chance was more than once against us, and I am of opinion the sepoys would not have been able to stand the cannonade five minutes longer than they did.' But, as usual, the Indian side maintained their resistance or advance by pushing forward their men to be indiscriminately slaughtered by the English fire. Some 6,000 men of the Oudh army fell dead on the field, against a loss of 300 on the English side, of which the Europeans were only thirty-two. Everywhere superiority of British arms and better training and better discipline of their troops resulted in victories with negligible loss of life.

As had happened several times in the past, Bihar was cleared of the Oudh invaders, and what now remained to be decided by the English was whether to carry the war into Shuja-ud-daula's territories. The defeat was not an adequate punishment for that Nawab, and the Fort William Council instructed their commader-in-chief, Hector Munro, to demand of the fugitive the cession of a part of his country, in addition to the delivery of Mir Kasim and others, as the price of a treaty of peace. 'If Shuja Dowla sues for peace,' Munro was told, 'these are the terms you are to demand, with which if he complies we authorise you to desist from further hostilities, agreeing to the mutual condition that we will not assist his enemies, and that he shall not assist ours.[30] The council also sug-

[29] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, p. 13.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 19 (Fort William Council's Consultation, dated 6 November 1764).

gested an alternative in the event of Shuja-ud-daula refusing to comply with the demand:

> If he does not sue for peace, or suing refuses to assent to these terms, we would have you prosecute the war in the most effectual manner to reduce him to compliance. But if that object cannot be attained without leading you to too great a distance from our own borders, we would have you give encouragement to such competitor for Shuja Dowla's dominions as you shall think most capable of supporting himself in the possession of them without requiring the further assistance of our forces after he is once established.[31]

But King Shah Alam, whose title as symbol of the Mughal rule was still a current coin, was not to be ignored, and therefore the council added in its instructions to Munro:

> Having never regarded the King as an accessory in the war we are very desirous of separating him from Shuja Dowla; and if this can be done by offering him on the foregoing terms, the possession and sovereignty of Shuja Dowla's country, we would prefer that to all other connections, and whilst there remain any hopes of gaining over the King, whatever persons' pretensions you shall find necessary to encourage, must be supported in the name of the King, and with a reserve of his rights.[32]

The council even anticipated that Shuja-ud-daula might be 'driven out of his country through the rebellion of his subject, or the mutiny of his troops'. There was reason for this anticipation. We have it from Ghulam Husain Khan that while Shuja-ud-daula was entering the province of Bihar in February 1764, 'his troops, burning and plundering to the distance of five or six cosses in every direction, did not leave a trace of population throughout all that tract of gound. The poor inhabitants, whose hearts had been expanded on hearing of the arrival of an Emperor and a Vazir, no sooner found themselves exposed to every kind of insult and oppression than they returned their heartiest thanks to the English, and prayed to God for their prosperity and return.[33] As a chronicler of contemporary events, Ghulam Hussain Khan is trustworthy, and the above account cannot be dismissed as a figment of imagination.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20. [32] Ghulam Husain Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 528.
[33] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, p. 20.

The council asked Munro to present a contrast to the people, during the English troops' march towards Benares:

> It has always been the rule of our conduct to conciliate the affections of the people in the countries where we have made war, and prevent to the utmost of our power all manner of plunder and destruction. This we must recommend to your strict observance, and think it the rather necessary on this occasion, as the city of Benares being reputed a place of great wealth may be a temptation to the sepoys, and it would give us a particular concern were any mischief committed in a place which is so much respected for its antiquity and held sacred in the eyes of the whole country.

With these instructions, Munro set out with his forces towards Oudh, and reaching Benares, met there, instead of hostility, an atmosphere of reception and surrender. Rich merchants, who had left in terror, returned to the city on Munro's assurance of protection, and gave four lakhs of rupees for the English army.[34] Balwant Singh, ruler of Benares, accepted the English as supplanters of the Nawab of Oudh, and not only offered to pay them the share of the revenues which he had been paying to Shuja-ud-daula, but 'ordered his people to seize such of the Vizier's troops as they may meet within the country'.[35] Shuja-ud-daula's Minister, Beni Bahadur, told Munro, at an interview he had with him, that if his master would not come to terms with the English, he would desert him and join them. The emperor was 'very happy' when Munro conveyed to him the council's terms, and said he would do 'anything' the English would 'prescribe'. He undertook to write to different chiefs in the realm 'not to join' Shuja-ud-daula, and to secure the loyalty of Beni Bahadur and Balwant Singh. He suggested that if the English got possession of Allahabad and the Chunargarh fort, he would be able to dispossess Shuja-ud-daula of the rest of his dominion.[36] Informing the Fort William council of these developments, Munro said (in his letter dated 22 November 1764) 'the King is under our protection', and added that before allowing him to act, 'I shall take care to have it under the King's hand that he holds these rights from the English, that he will agree to whatever the Governor and Council of Calcutta will prescribe to him, and pay the Hon'ble Company yearly such part

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 28 (Fort William Consultation dated 6 December 1764).
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 29. [36] *Ibid.*

of the revenues of the country as the President of Fort William will desire'.[37]

Shuja-ud-daula's constant refusal to deliver Mir Kasim and others, which finally banged the door of peace against him, fitted in with the desire of the emperor, who told the Calcutta council:

> If the English will, contrary to their interest, make peace with the Vizier, I will go to Delhi, for I cannot think of returning again into the hands of a man who has used me so ill. I have no friends I depend on more than the English; their former behaviour to me will make me ever respect and regard them. Now is their time to be in possession of a country abounding with riches and treasure. I shall be satisfied with whatever share they please of it.[38]

He despatched letters to the English Governor, to the Nawab of Bengal, to Carnac and to Shitab Rai, 'representing in general that Shuja Dowla has met with the just punishment of his perfidy and disobedience of his (the Emperor's) commands . . . and urging (the English) to establish' themselves 'and him in possession of Shuja-Dowla's country'.[39] The emperor was at this time, as he expressed in his letters to the English authorities, in 'great distress for money', and the Fort William council sent out instructions to Munro to 'advance him such sums as his exigencies may absolutely require'.[40] The emperor was a puppet no doubt, but his writ still prevailed in the country, he was held in high esteem, and the use of his title facilitated collection of revenues. The council, therefore, further instructed Munro:

> To avoid giving any umbrage or jealousy of our power to the King, or the nobles of the empire, we would have everything done under the sanction of his authority, and that we may appear as holding our acquisitions from him, and acting in the war under his authority in supporting his rights, and not he as holding those rights from us.[41]

After the negotiations (November and December 1764) between the emperor and the English had paved the way for a treaty between them, Shuja-ud-daula once again started peace parleys through Shitab Rai, and when again the demand for the delivery of English

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30. [38] *Ibid.*, p. 30. [39] *Ibid.*
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 31. [41] *Ibid.*

enemies—Mir Kasim, Sumro and the deserters—was repeated, he replied (3 January 1765) to Munro:

> If the English will now enter into friendship with me, I will immediately dismiss their enemies and withdraw my protection from them, and this friendship being confirmed, I will join with the English army in endeavouring to take them wherever they are to be found, I mean no equivocation in what I now write, for the truth of which I take God and His Holy Prophet to witness.[42]

Mir Kasim (having been released from captivity on the eve of the battle of Buxar) was no more in the possession of Shuja-ud-daula, but Sumro and the deserters were still in his employ, and as he was preparing for another engagement against the English and had collected an army of about 30,000, it does not seem safe to assume that he really meant what he said in his letter. And cleverer Munro rejoined:

> The contents of which I am made acquainted with ... do not correspond with my demands.... If you will write me another letter, the whole of it in your own handwriting, offering to make peace with the English and to deliver up to them Cossim, Sombre and the deserters that are with you, you will do right ... and then terms of peace will not be refused you.[43]

Moreover the Fort William authorities were now disinclined to subscribe to any proceedings which might create misgivings in the mind of the emperor, and noted in their Consultation, dated 17 January 1765:

> He (Shuja-ud-daula) was more earnest in his offers for peace than he had ever before appeared. This is a measure we should some time ago have noticed to see take place, but as through his obstinacy we have now entered into engagements with the King, no accommodation can take place without a due regard to the interest of His Majesty and those engagements, and previous to all, the absolute delivery into our hands of Mir Cossim, Sombre and our deserters.[44]

[42] Bengal Secret Consultation, 1763-75, vol. III, pp. 11-12 (January 13, 17, 1765). [43] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12 (3 January 1765).
[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

The new peace parleys thus ended abruptly, and the stage was set for more skirmishes between the two on the soil of Oudh. Already, during the period of the negotiations, a strategy of how to bring Oudh and its principal chiefs under the control of the English and the emperor, was being worked out. The emperor suggested that if the English forces could capture the forts of Chunar and Allahabad, he would be able, without much difficulty, to root out the authority of Shuja-ud-daula from 'the rest of the country'. The English undertook to do the job. Armed with the emperor's order, Munro sent an ultimatum and after despatching a notice to Sidi Mohammed Bashir Khan, the commandant of the fort, to surrender and then repaired to the place with his army. A great disaster awaited the English. Bashir Khan readily agreed to submit to the imperial command, but the garrison refused; they turned out the commandant, and decided to defend the fort. As usual, early morning (3 December 1764) was appointed for the attack, but the advantageous element of surprise was missing here. The garrison was already aware of the coming attack, and it was resisted with admirable doggedness, and ultimately repelled. Next day, at 2 o'clock in the morning, the attack was renewed to meet the same fate again. With 1,000 Indian soldiers and fifty Europeans on the English side killed or wounded, the Chunar siege cost them much more than did the decisive battle of Buxar.

The frustration of the Chunar defeat was aggravated by the news, conveyed to Munro by his Indian spies that Shuja-ud-daula had left Allahabad and was marching with his forces towards Benares. The combination of several factors had imparted to Benares singular strategic importance. The local ruler, Balwant Singh, who never was whole-heartedly loyal to Shuja-ud-daula, had now completely surrendered to the English; the English had made Benares their base for future operations; the emperor had made it his headquarters, and was looking forward to gaining some kind of stability with their help; Beni Bahadur too was there, (apparently) ostensibly engaged in peace negotiations on behalf of Shuja-ud-daula, but actually thinking of formally denouncing his master. If Benares was surprised, Munro apprehended, by Shuja-ud-daula, while the English forces were engaged in a desperate siege, all their achievements in Oudh would be undone; the fugitive Nawab Wazir would re-acquire the person of the emperor, and the English would be deprived of a title in whose name they were acting and were to act in future in the new ter-

ritory. Munro, therefore, withdrew from Chunar and rushed back to Benares. During the absence of Shuja-ud-daula in Bihar, his territories had fallen into a state of anarchy. Many of the chiefs had turned rebellious and repudiated his authority; only a few of them were willing to join with him in the fresh action he was planning. The Mughal troops, whose leaders were prepared to be bought over, constituted one of the main fighting forces of the Nawab-Wazir. Desertions were constantly reducing his fighting power. Yet between fighting and abject surrender, he chose the former, hoping against hope that a chance might re-establish his prestige and the rebels might rally again under his banner. By the middle of January 1765, Shuja-ud-daula was within five miles of Benares. The English force having already returned (7 January) from Chunar, proceeded to meet the enemy and attacked them in the morning on 18 Jaṇuary. With bewildered eyes the Nawab-Wazir witnessed the spectacle of being abandoned by his men; he submitted to the inevitable, and retreated in disorder. After the 'fighting' was over, the Mughal commanders, Abdul Rahim Khan and Mohammed Ali Khan, offered to place themselves, with their 6,000 troops, at the disposal of Major Robert Fletcher. (In December 1764, Major Carnac had been re-appointed commander-in-chief, with the rank of a colonel and the title of a Brigadier-General, and pending his arrival in Oudh, Munro had been relieved by Fletcher on 7 January 1765.) Shuja-ud-daula fled towards Jaunpur. In order to prevent him from making that place a foothold for further preparations, the English troops chased him. Safety, and not fighting, was now his aim. He crossed Jaunpur, and accelerated the pace of his flight until he was at a safe distance (ten or twelve miles). On 20 January the English took possession of the town and the fort with a little fighting necessitated by the feeble resistance offered by the musketry of the fort.

The English now turned their attention to Allahabad and Chunar. As in the case of Chunar, the emperor again issued orders calling upon the authorities of the fort of Allahabad to put it in the hands of the English commander, Major Fletcher, who, he said, had been sent by him. But the likelihood of disobedience to the orders was anticipated, and the English, who had to leave a part of their forces for the defence of Benares, augmented their invading party by 4,000 troops of Mirza Najaf Khan, who was then in the employ of Hindupati of Bundelkhand, and was, like his master, in a revengeful disposition against the Nawab-Wazir. The anticipated possibility of defiance turned out to be a reality, and both

the deputy Nawab of Allahabad and the commandant of the fort (Ali Beg Khan and Ghulam Husain Khan respectively) refused to surrender. The garrison consisted of 2,000 men and possessed 150 pieces of cannon, hardly a match to the invaders who were far more numerous and carried considerably more fighting equipment. Another factor, which made English victory doubly sure, was Mir Najaf Khan's[45] knowledge of the vulnerable parts of the fort, in which he had resided for years during the governorship of a relation of his, Mohammed Kuli Khan. The weak points were made the special target of attack; the besieged men had to choose between annihilation and surrender; they chose the latter. It was a brief action in which seven men on each side were killed.

An invading party had been simultaneously sent to Chunar. Here also, the English force was augmented by those of the emperor and the ruler of Benares, and the invading party was now much stronger than it was on the previous occasion. Yet the garrison again refused to surrender and gave a heroic resistance. But the men in the fort had only fifteen days' provision, and then they learnt that the Nawab-Wazir, for whom they were supposed to be fighting, had been irretrievably suppressed and was now a fugitive. These two factors made a decision for the resisters, and they surrendered the fort. Here too the loss of life was insignificant. The formal surrender of both the forts, Allahabad and Chunar, happened to be made on the same date, 8 February 1765.

After his flight from Jaunpur, Shuja-ud-daula escaped into Ruhelkhand with the intention of preparing, with the help of local chiefs, another expedition against the English. But the English captured Lucknow, won obedience of Shuja-ud-daula's officers and landlords by promising them protection and continuance in their positions, lodged the emperor in the fort of Allahabad, and declared themselves as conquerors of Oudh and the emperor as the direct ruler of Shuja-ud-daula's dominion. Beni Bahadur, who had deserted Shuja-ud-daula while the latter was running for life from Jaunpur, joined the English (9 March 1765) with a considerable number of troops, and was offered governorship of his late master's territories. He accepted the offer, and promised to give any security the English might demand of his loyalty to them. But when he learnt that for the security, he would have to leave his women as hostages under the English guard, he changed his mind and left Benares, where he had transferred his loyalty to the victors, on the pretext that he was going to Lucknow to bring his family. He

[45] Handsome by rewards by the English.

again decided to become a devoted lieutenant to Shuja-ud-daula, but it was too late.

On his way to Ruhelkhand and in Ruhelkhand itself, Shuja-ud-daula made desperate efforts to form a confederacy of Indian rulers, meeting one chief after another. He sought an alliance with Najib-ud-daula, then supreme dictator at Delhi. Nothing tangible came out of these overtures. He then turned to the Marathas whose leader, Malhar Rao Holkar, undertook, on certain terms, to fight Shuja-ud-daula's battle for re-conquest of Oudh. Holkar got together 30,000 troops and proceeded with Shuja-ud-daula and the remnant of his force towards Allahabad. In the way, the allied army attacked the town of Karra (twenty-four miles south of Kanpur) of which Mirza Najaf Khan was administrator and for whose protection the English had detained two battalions of their Indian soldiers. The town's resisting power was hopelessly unequal to the attackers', and Najaf Khan surrendered it. (It happened in the third week of April 1765.)

At Karra an interesting episode occurred, which provided an opportunity to Najaf Khan, on Shuja-ud-daula's own initiative, to join the English at Allahabad, and to convey to them Shuja-ud-daula's dislike of his latest ally. One day, after the Karra victory, Shuja-ud-daula went into the camp of Holkar. The arrogant Maratha leader who was engrossed in playing chess completely ignored him; he did not even make a gesture of acknowledgment of the guest's presence. And when Shuja-ud-daula made a humorous remark evidently to make his presence felt, Holkar made on him an urgent demand for money. The late Nawab-Wazir returned, like a child slapped by an outsider, and consulted with Najaf Khan, preferring surrender to the English and seeking his good offices to negotiate terms. Najaf Khan welcomed the opportunity which he desired and which came to him unsought and unsolicited.

The English commander-in-chief, Carnac (who resumed command in Oudh on 13 February 1765) had in the meantime received news of the Maratha movement, and, in order to be first again with the offensive, as was the English strategy, he hastily proceeded to Karra. Shuja-ud-daula's offer for peace was of no meaning, for the principal fighter this time was Mulhar Rao who had no knowledge of the underhand errand. Shuja-ud-daula had acted under an emotional strain, and understandably, therefore, Najaf Khan joined the English, with the body of troops he had taken with him, with a view to fighting the Marathas. In the first week

of May, the English made a vigorous attack on the armies of the new allies, ostensibly united, but inwardly looking down upon each other. The incessant firing from the English side, which was the usual tactics of their warfare, was so effective that the enemy retreated in disorder. Once again the English established the superiority of their arms and discipline over the Indian. In the third week of May, again there was fighting between the fugitive Marathas and the English near Kalpi, and again the decision went in favour of the former.

Broken down irretrievably, Shuja-ud-daula, acting on the advice of his lieutenants, surrendered his person to the English and begged for an honourable treatment. The English received him with warmth and respect, and as they needed in Oudh a man who could be useful as a bulwark against the threatening power of the Marathas, they decided to reinstate him to the Nawabship, binding him down to terms which he would not think of violating without peril to his position.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Najm-Ud-Daula as Nawab: The English as Diwan

WHILE MIR JAFAR was confined to his death-bed, he had nominated Najm-ud-daula to succeed him; in fact the latter had already started acting as Nawab. In order that there should be no complication as to the sucession after his death, Mir Jafar had communicated his will to Fort William. With the inheritance of the throne, all the commitments and responsibilities attaching to it naturally devolved on the successor, and no fresh agreement between him and the English Company was called for. But since it was always a fresh treaty that provided Governors and Council of Fort William in the past with an opportunity to make money for themselves, the present occasion was not to be allowed to pass off 'unceremoniously', although the Nawabship did not come to the new incumbent as a prize from the English. The Council appointed a deputation consisting of Johnstone, Leycester, Senior, and Middleton, to negotiate terms of a treaty. But before the treaty had been negotiated and concluded, the English started imposing their will on the new Nawab; the first and the most significant thing they did was to send out instructions to Muhammad Reza Khan, deputy Nawab of Dacca, asking him to proceed to the capital (Murshidabad), to become the Nawab's deputy there. Reza Khan was a lackey of the English, made presents to the principal men of Fort William, and considered them as his real bosses. By this device of placating the English, he withheld from state treasury large amounts of revenue collections, and Mir Jafar had complained to the Fort William governor as late as 30 December 1764, suggesting: 'perhaps someone at Calcutta has made the said Khan easy by telling him that no one will trouble him about the balance.'[1] When Najm-ud-daula was apprised of the English instructions to Reza Khan, he protested to the governor: 'The Khan has paid only six *lakhs* of rupees and a large sum is still due from him. If he leaves Dacca, the realisation of the money will be considerably delayed.' He also

[1] *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, vol. I, No. 2522.

pleaded that if the instructions would be carried out, he 'will not be able to discharge his debts to the Company', and that 'with the help of Mr. Middleton and others the *Nizamat* is being conducted in the most proper manner'. And he requested that 'the summoning of the Khan to Murshidabad may be deferred'.[2] The governor did not listen to the Nawab's pleading, and wrote back to say that 'the Khan will not act otherwise than as a faithful servant'.[3] The governor also wanted to foist Raja Durlabh Ram on the Nawab, and Najm-ud-daula again protested that there was 'utmost enmity' between Durlabh Ram and Mir Jafar, and that 'the Raja always violated the engagements he entered into with the latter'. The Nawab was afraid that 'the employing of such a person will be a means of throwing the affairs of the Nizamat into disorder'.[4] This request was not turned down, and Fort William did not insist upon the appointment of Durlabh Ram.[5] In the meantime the terms of a new treaty were drawn up.

The Treaty and Agreement concluded between the Governor and Council of Fort William, and Nawab Najm-ud-daula provided:

ON THE PART OF THE COMPANY

We, the Governor and Council, do engage to secure to the Nabob Nudjum-ul-Dowla all the Soubahdarry of the Provinces of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa; and to support him therein with the Company's Forces against all his enemies. We will also, at all times, keep up such force as may be necessary effectually to assist and support him in the defence of the Provinces; and as our troops will be more to be depended on than any the Nabob can have, and less expensive to him, he need, therefore, entertain none but such as are requisite for the support of the Civil Officers of his Government, and the business of his collections through the different districts.

We do further promise, that in consideration the Nabob shall continue to assist in defraying the extraordinary expenses of the war, now carrying on against Shujah-ud-Dowla, with five lacs of Rupees per month, which was agreed to by his father, whatever sums may be hereafter received of the King, on account of our assistance afforded him in the war, shall be repaid to the Nabob.

[2] *Ibid.*, Najm-ud-daula's letter dated 20 February 1765, to the Governor, Fort William. No. 2566.
[3] *Ibid.*, Letter dated 23 February 1765, No. 2567A.
[4] *Ibid.*, Letter dated 24 April 1765, No. 2630.
[5] *Ibid.*, Letter dated 5 May 1765. No. 2635.

ON THE PART OF THE NABOB

In consideration of the assistance the Governor and Council have agreed to afford in securing to me the succession in the Soubahdarry of Bengal, Behar and Orissa, heretofore held by my Father, the late Nabob Meer Jaffier Ally Khan, and supporting me in it against all my enemies, I do agree and bind myself to the faithful performance of the following Articles:

1. The Treaty which my father formerly concluded with the Company upon his first accession to the Nizamut, engaging to regard the honour and reputation of the Company and of their Governor and Council as his own, and granting perwannahs for the currency of the Company's trade, the same Treaty, as far as is consistent with the Articles hereafter agreed, I do hereby ratify and confirm.
2. Considering the weighty charge of Government and how essential it is for myself, for the welfare of the country, and for the Company's business, that I should have a person who has had experience therein to advise and assist me, I do agree to have one fixed with me, with the advice of the Governor and Council, in the station of Naib Soubah, who shall accordingly have immediately under me the chief management of all affairs. And as Mahomed Reza Khan, the Naib of Dacca, has in every respect my approbation and that of the Governor and Council, I do further agree that this trust shall be conferred on him, and I will not displace him without the acquiescence of those gentlemen; and in case any alteration in this appointment should hereafter appear advisable, that Mahomed Reza Khan, provided he has acquitted himself with fidelity in his administration, shall in such case be reinstated in the Naibship of Dacca, with the same authority as heretofore.
3. The business of the collection of the revenues shall, under the Naib Soubah, be divided into two or more branches, as may appear proper; and as I have the fullest dependence and confidence on the attachment of the English, and their regard to my interest and dignity, and am desirous of giving them every testimony thereof, I do further consent, that the appointment and dismissal of the Muttaseddees of those branches, and the allotment of their several districts shall be with the approbation of the Governor and Council; and considering

how much men of my rank and station are obliged to trust to the eyes and recommendations of the servants about them, and how liable to be deceived, it is my further will that the Governor and Council shall be at liberty to object and point out to me when improper people are entrusted, or where my officers and subjects are oppressed, and I will pay a proper regard to such representations, that my affairs may be conducted with honour, my people everywhere be happy, and their grievances be redressed.

4. I do confirm to the Company, as a fixed resource, for defraying the ordinary expenses of their troops, the Chuklas of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong, in as full a manner as heretofore ceded by my father. The sum of five Lakhs of Sicca rupees per month for their maintenance was further agreed to be paid by my father; I agree to pay the same out of my treasury, while the exigency for keeping up so large an Army continues. When the Company's occasions will admit of diminution of the expenses they are put to on account of those troops, the Governor and Council will then relieve me from such a proportion of this assignment, as the increased expenses incurred by keeping up the whole Force necessary for the defence of the Provinces will admit of; and as I esteem the Company's troops entirely equal thereto and as my own, I will only maintain such as are immediately necessary for the dignity of my person and Government, and the business of my collections throughout the Provinces.
5. I do ratify and confirm to the English the privilege granted to them by their Firmaun and several Husbulhookums of carrying on their trade by means of their own dustucks, free from all duties, taxes, or impositions, in all parts of the country, excepting in the articles of Salt, on which a duty of 2 per cent is to be levied on the rowana or Hooghly market price.
6. I give the Company the liberty of purchasing half the Saltpetre produced in the country of Purnea, which their Gomastahs shall send to Calcutta; the other half shall be collected by my Foujdar for the use of my Offices; and I will suffer no other person to make purchases of this article in that country.
7. In the Chuckla of Sylhet, for the space of five years, commencing with the Bengal year 1171, my Foujdar and a

Gomastah, on the part of the Company, shall jointly provide Chunam, of which each shall defray half the expenses, and half the Chunam so made shall be given to the Company.

8. Although I should occasionally remove to other places in the Provinces, I agree that the books of the Circar shall be always kept, and the business conducted at Moorshedabad, and that it shall, as heretofore, be the seat of my Government; and wherever I am, I consent that an English gentleman shall reside with me to transact all affairs between me and the Company, and that a person of high rank shall also reside on my part at Calcutta to negotiate with the Governor and Council.
9. I will cause Rupees coined in Calcutta to pass in every respect equal to the siccas of Moorshedabad, without any deduction of batta; and whosoever shall demand batta shall be punished; the annual loss on coinage, by the fall of batta on the issuing of the siccas, is a very heavy grievance to the country; and after mature consideration, I will, in concert with the Governor and Council, pursue whatever may appear the best method for remedying it.
10. I will allow no Europeans whatever to be entertained in my service, and if there already be any, they shall be immediately dismissed.
11. The Kistbundee for payment of the restitution to the sufferers in the late troubles as executed by my Father, I will see faithfully paid. No delay shall be made in this business.
12. I confirm and will abide by the Treaty which my Father formerly made with the Dutch.
13. If the French come into the country I will not allow them to erect any fortifications, maintain forces, or hold lands, Zemindarees, &c., but they shall pay tribute, and carry on their trade as in former times.
14. Some regulations shall be hereafter settled between us for deciding all disputes which may arise between the English Gomastahs and my Officers, in the different parts of the country.[6]

(The Treaty was signed by the Governor and Council of Fort William on 20 February 1765, and by the Nawab on 25 February.) On 23 June 1765, Najm-ud-daula issued a *sanad* 'reverting in

[6] *Indian Records* (Relations between the British Government and the Nawabs Nazim of Bengal, Behar and Orissa), pp. 15-18.

perpetuity' the territory known as Clive's Jagir to the Company.

On the conclusion of the treaty, the principal men of Fort William extracted their 'presents' from the Nawab. The total amount extracted was Rs. 14 lakhs. Of this the Governor (John Spencer, who officiated on the departure of Vansittart and the arrival of the new permanent incumbent, Clive) got Rs. 2 lakhs. Of the members of the deputation, Johnstone received Rs. 2,37,000, Leycester, Rs. 1,12,000, and Senior and Middleton, Rs. 1,22,500 each. Johnstone demanded and received Rs. 50,000 for his brother also, who was not connected in any way with the deal.

In the summer of 1765, Clive re-appeared on the political stage of India. He had already been decorated with the title of the Baron of Plassey, and in the middle of 1764, he was selected again by the Court of Directors to preside over their affairs in Bengal. After Plassey, when the Government of Bengal had been made subservient to Fort William, an idea arose in Clive's mind that it was within the compass of practicability for the English to supplant Indian rulers. On 7 January 1759, he had communicated the idea to the Prime Minister of his country, William Pitt, and suggested, in the following words, how it could be realised:

> The great revolution that has been effected here by the success of the English arms, and the vast advantages gained to the Company by a treaty concluded in consequence thereof, have, I observe, in some measure engaged the public attention; but more may yet in time be done, if the Company will exert themselves in the manner the importance of their present possessions and future prospects deserve. I have represented to them in the strongest terms the expediency of sending out and keeping up constantly such a force as will enable them to embrace the first opportunity of further aggrandising themselves; and I dare pronounce, from a thorough knowledge of the Country Government, and of the genius of the people acquired from two years' application and experiences, that such an opportunity will soon occur....There will be less difficulty in bringing about such an event, as the natives themselves have no attachment to particular princes....But so large a sovereignty may possibly be an object too extensive for a mercantile company; and it is to be feared they are not of themselves able, without the nation's assistance, to maintain so wide a dominion....It is well worth consideration, that this project may be brought about without draining the mother country, as has been too much the case with

> our possessions in America. A small force from home will be sufficient, as we always make sure of any number we please of black troops. . . . I shall only further remark, that I have communicated it to no other person but yourself; nor should I have troubled you, Sir, but from a conviction that you will give a favourable reception to any proposal intended for the public good.[7]

Clive's proposal did not arouse interest in England, but in India his compatriots had already begun erecting on the foundation of the British empire he had laid in 1757. He reached Madras on 10 April 1765, enroute to Bengal, and 'was delighted'[8] to know that Mir Jafar was dead and that the area under the political influence of the English had been largely extended. A week after his arrival in Madras, he intimated to the chairman (Rous) of the Company what he contemplated to do in Bengal: 'We must indeed become the Nabobs ourselves, in Fact, if not in Name, perhaps totally so without disguise.' And he added:

> Let us, and without delay, compleat our three European Regiments to one thousand each. Such an Army together with five hundred light Horse, 3 or 4 Companies of Artillery, and the Troops of the Country will absolutely render us invincible. In short, if Riches and Stability are the objects of the Company, this is the Method, the only Method, we now have for attaining and securing them.[9]

But Clive regulated his ambition by cautiousness and farsightedness, and his immediate aim was to consolidate the English position in Bengal. The first thing he did on his arrival in Calcutta on 3 May 1765, was to communicate this view to the English commander-in-chief, Carnac (then in Oudh): 'Your long and extensive expedition, I could wish had been avoided; but of that and all other affairs I will speak more at large. . . . For the present, I can only say, that our views ought to be confined to Bengal.'[10]

But the consideration which had persuaded the Court of Directors to re-appoint Clive as Governor of Fort William was wholly different from the ambition he was entertaining after his arrival

[7] Sir John Malcolm, *Life of Robert, First Lord Clive*, vol. II, p. 119.
[8] J. Talboys Wheeler, *Early Records of British India*, p. 329.
[9] Quoted in Sir George Forrest, *The Life of Lord Clive*, vol. II, p. 257.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 261.

in India. Their conscience and business policy had been seriously disturbed by their servants' misconduct in Bengal, and they needed a man of ability, experience and dependability to head the Fort William Council. The managing body of the East India Company was then divided into two groups; Clive, now one of the influential proprietors of the Company, belonged to the group which was in majority, and was considered most suitable to carry out the Court's policies scrupulously. Clive had himself made a big fortune during his first term of governorship by questionable methods, but the court now held a high opinion of him. About three months before his arrival in Bengal, they had deplored, in their 'General Letter' (dated 15 February 1765) to Fort William, their servants' 'oppressions', and said: 'We have such an entire Confidence in Lord Clive's great Abilities and good intentions, that we make no doubt these great abuses will be the particular objects of his care and attention; and that he will be able to carry these our orders effectually into execution.[11]

Soon after the assumption of his charge, Clive discovered that the Governor and Council of Fort William had again, in flagrant violation of the Directors' orders, exploited the recent occasion of the change in the Nawabship of Bengal to make illicit gains. Najm-ud-daula also represented to Clive and his council that since Mir Jafar's death, Reza Khan, who had knowledge of the Nawab's opposition to his appointment, had distributed twenty lakhs of rupees among the members of the Fort William council in order that they should maintain him in his office.

The knowledge of these illicit gains compelled Clive to vindicate the faith the Directors had reposed in him. They had laid down that 'all persons in the Company's service should execute covenants, restraining them from accepting, directly or indirectly, from the Indian Princes, any grant of lands, rents, or territorial dominion, or any present whatever, exceeding the value of four thousand rupees, without the consent of the Court of Directors'.[12] Clive laid the matter before the council, but was, to his dismay, confronted with the example of his own unclean past, which Johnstone dug out to justify the latest deal. Johnstone said:

> With regard to presents in general, we have the approved example of the President, Lord Clive, himself, for our guide, who, through this Nabob's father's princely bounty on his coming

[11] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, Directors Letters, p. 30.
[12] Sir George Forrest, *The Life of Lord Clive*, vol. II, p. 262.

to the government had made his fortune easy, and the Company's welfare his only motive for staying in India, yet acknowledges his having made use of the influence of Juggut Seit to apply for a jaghire which though amounting to £30,000 per annum, was not thought improper by him to accept of, even in the circumstances of distress he then represents the old Nawab to have been in.[13]

Clive had no convincing answer to give, and explained away his conduct by saying that the 'present was given to me in a military capacity only, as a reward for real service rendered to the Nabob at a very dangerous crisis'.[14] Clive had participated in the conspiracy and treacherous transactions against Siraj-ud-daula, and had led the English force to Plassey as a servant of the Company; and it was the Company which should have benefitted, as it actually did, in consequence, and not Clive. Clive suffered a moral defeat at the Council meeting. But so far as Johnstone and his colleagues were concerned, they were to conduct themselves according to the directions of the Court of Directors, and not to emulate Clive; and the Court, on a reference being made to it, upheld the objection taken by Clive.

But Clive did not have the patience to keep his avarice in check even for a month, and prepared a scheme which would yield him from month to month a heavy amount of money, in addition to the salary and allowances fixed for him by the Court of Directors. The appointment of Clive had been decided upon at a time when the Directors were much exercised over the disturbances and oppression which had resulted from the English merchants' indulgence in the inland trade. The Directors considered inland trade as an unlawful extension of the English business in Bengal, and issued strict orders asking the Fort William authorities to withdraw all English merchants from it. The main factor which induced the Directors to think of Clive as most suitable for the presidency of Bengal was that his views with regard to the inland trade were in conformity with theirs. He had unambiguously written to them in his letter dated 27 April 1764: 'The trade in salt, betel, and tobacco, having been one cause of the present disputes, I hope these articles will be restored to the Nabob, and your servants absolutely forbid to trade in them.'[15]

[13] Peter Auber, *Rise and Progress of the British Power in India,* vol. I, p. 134. [14] *Ibid.,* p. 137.
[15] Quoted in Edward Thornton, *History of the British Empire in India,* vol. I, p. 503.

Clive also 'promised' that 'he would not engage in any kind of trade himself, but leave all commercial advantages to the servants, to be divided amongst themselves.'[16] The Directors had expressed concern at and disapproval of the inland trade in their letters dated 8 February 1764 and 1 June 1764, and had reiterated it in their letter dated 15 February 1765: 'We gave you our sentiments and directions very fully, in respect to the inland trade of Bengal; we now enforce the same in the strongest manner, and positively insist, that you take no steps whatever towards renewing this trade, without our express leave.'[17]

Yet within a month of his arrival in Calcutta, Clive, betraying the confidence reposed in him by the Directors, and, as the Company's contemporary servant, William Bolts, remarks, 'in contravention to his most solemn declarations',[18] 'entered into a partnership' with some of his colleagues in the select committee, 'for the purpose of dealing in salt',[19] betel nuts and tobacco. This partnership was soon converted into a company of the East India Company's leading servants in Bengal, and the select committee ruled that none, whether Indian or European, would henceforth deal in the three articles. Clive deprived the Indian traders completely of whatever of the inland trade in salt, betelnuts, and tobacco, was left to them. The resolution the select committee adopted in this connection (10 August 1765) said:

That the whole trade shall be carried on by an exclusive company formed for that purpose, and consisting of all those who may be deemed justly entitled to a share.

That the salt, beetle-nut and tobacco produced in or imported into Bengal shall be purchased by this established company, and public advertisements shall be issued strictly prohibiting all other persons whatsoever, who are dependent on our government, to deal in those articles.

That application shall be made to the Nabob to issue the like prohibition to all his officers and subjects of the districts where any quantity of either of those articles is manufactured or produced.

That the salt, beetle-nut and tobacco, thus purchased by the public company, shall be transported to a certain number of places for sale, to be there, and there only disposed of by their

[16] William Bolts, *Considerations on India Affairs* (1772), p. 165.
[17] *Bengal & Madras Papers, op. cit.*, p. 300.
[18] Bolts, *op. cit.*, p. 166. [19] *Ibid.*, and Forrest, *op. cit.*, p. 300.

agents; and that the country merchants may then become purchasers, and again transport these articles whither they have the greatest prospect of profit.[20]

The formalities necessary for the implementation of this resolution were hurriedly gone through; the puppet Nawab sent round a circular order to different officers, and within weeks, monopoly over the three important articles of inland trade was established, and, perhaps for the first time in history, producers and dealers became bonded dependents of the Company. Clive, who had made solemn declaration that he would not engage himself in any trade, was the recipient of greater profits than any other member of the Company's servants. This monopoly, according to Bolts, was 'a monopoly the most cruel in its nature, and most destructive, in its consequences, to the Company's affairs in Bengal, of all that have late been established there. Perhaps it stands unparalleled in the history of any government that ever existed on earth, considered as a public act.'[21]

Obligatory bonds were taken by the authorities of the Company from all chiefs and landlords declaring that they would not 'dispose of a single grain of salt ... made within the dependencies' of their territories to any person excepting the English gentlemen 'called the English Society of Merchants'. The salt monopoly had had a most severe effect on the economy of the people. The Society paid 'at the rate of 75 rupees per 100 maunds, for what was sold in many places for upwards of 500 rupees per 100 maund; which in effect was making a poor inhabitant pay at the rate of $6\frac{1}{2}$ rupees for a quantity of salt which, in the common course of the trade, he would have bought for one rupee'.[22]

After over seven weeks' interlude of the above incidents Clive applied himself exclusively to his self-entrusted mission, namely, to make the Company Nawab 'in fact, if not in name', and left on 25 June 1765 for Allahabad to meet the emperor. Reaching there on 9 August, Clive had an audience with the emperor, and after orally settling the terms of mutual gain, he presented two petitions soliciting (1) grant of the *diwani* (right to collect the revenues) of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa to the Company, and (2) confirmation of Najm-ud-daula in the Nawabship of these provinces. The emperor, who was homeless and resourceless, and had been practically a prisoner of Shuja-ud-daula since 1761, was provided with home, resources and dignity: he was offered to be placed in

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 167-8. [21] *Ibid.*, p. 164. [22] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

possession of two fertile provinces, Allahabad and Karra, yielding an annual revenue of Rs. 28 lakhs, and was assured that, since the English recognised him as emperor of India, he would be regularly paid the imperial share of Rs. 26 lakhs[23] annually from the revenues of the Bengal provinces. The fugitive Mughal descendant was overwhelmed with gratitude, and readily agreed to the proposals. On 12 August 1765, the emperor took his seat on an improvised throne in Clive's tent, and in a formal ceremony granted the documents the Fort William Governor had applied for. The *farman*, conferring the grant of the Diwani on the Company said:

> At this happy time our royal *Firman*, indispensably requiring obedience, is issued; that whereas, in consideration of the attachment and services of the high and mighty, the noblest of exalted nobles, the chief of illustrious warriors, our faithful servants and sincere well-wishers, worthy of our royal favours, the English Company, we have granted them the Diwani of the Provinces of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa ... as a free gift and altamagau, without the association of any other person ... it is requisite that the said Company engage to be security for the sum of twenty-six lacs of Rupees a year, for our royal revenue, which sum has been appointed from the Nawab Najm-ud-daula Bahadur, and regularly remit the same to the royal *Sarkar*; and in this case, as the said Company are obliged to keep up a large Army, for the protection of the Provinces of Bengal, etc., we have granted to them whatsoever may remain out of the revenues of the said Provinces, after remitting the sum of twenty-six lacs of Rupees to the royal *Sarkar*, and providing for the expenses of the *Nizamat*. It is requisite that our royal descendants, the Viziers, the bestowers of dignity, the *Omras* high in rank, the great officers, etc. . . . leave the said office in possession of the said Company, from generation to generation, for ever and ever. Looking upon them to be assured from dismissal or removal, they must, on no account whatsoever, give them any interruption, and they must regard them as excused and exempted from the payment of all the customs of the Diwani

[23] On 19 August 1765, a separate agreement was signed between Shah Alam and Clive (on behalf of the Company), in which, the emperor, in compliance with the latter's demand agreed to pay, out of his pension of Rs. 26 lakhs, a sum of Rs. 2 lakhs annually to Mir Najaf Khan in consideration of his (Najaf Khan) 'having joined the English forces'. (William Bolts, *Considerations on Indian Affairs,* Appendix XXII, p. 36.)

and royal demands. Knowing our orders on the subject to be most strict and positive, let them not deviate therefrom.[24]

It was the most ludicruous performance ever witnessed in an imperial court. An emperor, without an iota of empire in his possession, without adequate wherewithal to support himself, and dependent of a foreign trading company, issues a writ, not to beguile himself or that company, but the people who, in their ignorance, still believed that he really held the sceptre and therefore the right to collect the revenues or nominate an agent to collect them!

The grant of the Diwani necessitated a new agreement to be concluded with the Nawab of Bengal, whose position was now no less ludicruous than that of the emperor. The Company were the masters of the revenues, and he was head of the government! With his hand removed from the purse, the Nawab became a paid titular head, a paid servant of the Company, like the emperor. On 30 September, he signed the following agreement drafted for him at the dictation of Fort William:

> The King having been graciously pleased to grant to the English Company the *Diwani* of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, with the revenues thereof, as a free gift for ever, on certain conditions, whereof one is that there shall be a sufficient allowance out of the said revenues for supporting the expenses of the Niazmat: be it known to all whom it may concern that I do now agree to accept of the annual sum of *Sicca* Rupees 53,86,131-9, as an adequate allowance for the support of the Nizamat, which is to be regularly paid as follows, viz. the sum of Rupees 17,78,854-1, for all my household expenses, servants, etc., and the remaining sum of Rupees 36,07,277-8, for the maintenance of such horses, sepoys, peons, etc., as may be thought necessary ... but on no account ever to exceed that amount....This agreement (by the blessing of God) I hope will be inviolably observed, as long as the English Company's factories continue in Bengal.[25]

A great event had taken place in the history of India; it was a silent revolution, but Clive would not like the tenor of administration to be disturbed, and therefore continued the existing

[24] C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries,* (4th ed.) vol. I, p. 225.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

arrangement for collection of the revenues. Raja Shitab Rai, who had equitted himself creditably as the Company's spy at the court of Shuja-ud-daula, was rewarded with the post of *Naib* (deputy) *Diwan* of Bihar; he was now a servant of the Company, and not of the Nawab. Reza Khan, who had been imposed on Najm-ud-daula against the latter's will, was put in charge of the collections in Bengal. But Clive did not trust Reza Khan. 'Never trust to the ambition of any Mussulman whatever',[26] he would say. And he added: 'I am as fully averse to Reza Ali Khan's remaining in the great post of Naib Soubah. His being a Mussulman, acute and clever, are reasons of themselves, if there were no others, against trusting that man with too much power.'[27] Therefore to curtail his power, Clive appointed Rai Durlabh Ram (the man who played a leading role in the conspiracy against Siraj-ud-daula, and who had given ample proof of his loyalty to the English) and the two heads of the firm of Jagat Seth (who had similarly earned trustworthiness) to be with him members of a commission to carry on the administration under the direction of the Fort William Governor.

At Allahabad, another matter whose disposal had been kept in abeyance until the arrival of Clive, was the settlement to be reached with Shuja-ud-daula. Like Shah Alam and Najm-ud-daula, he too was now completely at the mercy of the English. The following treaty was drawn up for him, and he put his signatures on it on 16 August:

1. A perpetual and universal peace, sincere friendship, and firm union shall be established between His Highness Shuja-ud-daula and his heirs, on the one part, and His Excellency Najm-ud-daula, and the English East India Company, on the other.
2. In case the dominions of His Highness Shuja-ud-daula shall at any time hereafter be attacked, His Excellency Najm-ud-daula and the English Company shall assist him with a part or the whole of their forces, according to the exigency of his affairs, and so far as may be consistent with their own security: and if the dominions of His Excellency Najm-ud-daula or the English Company shall be attacked, His Highness shall, in like manner, assist them with a part or the whole of his forces. In the case of the English Company's

[26] Forrest, *op. cit.*, p. 261 (Clive's letter to Carnac).
[27] Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 359 (Clive's letter to Carnac).

forces being employed in His Highness's service, the extraordinary expence of the same is to be defrayed by him.

3. His Highness solemnly engages never to entertain or receive Kasim Ali Khan, the late Subadar of Bengal, etc., Sombre, the assassin of the English, nor any of the European deserters, within his dominions, nor to give the least countenance, support, or protection to them. He likewise solemnly engages to deliver up to the English whatever Europeans may in future desert from them into his country.
4. The King Shah Alam shall remain in full possession of Kora and such part of the province of Allahabad as he now possesses, which are ceded to His Majesty, as a royal demesne, for the support of his dignity and expences.
5. His Highness Shuja-ud-daula engages in a most solemn manner, to continue Balwant Sing in the zemindaris of Benares, Ghazipur, and all those districts he possessed at the time he came over to the late Nawab Jafar Ali Khan and the English on the condition of his paying the same revenue as heretofore.
6. In consideration of the great expence incurred by the English Company in carrying on the late war, His Highness agrees to pay them fifty lacs of Rupees.
7. His Highness shall allow the English Company to carry on a trade, duty free, throughout the whole of his dominions.
8. All the relations and subjects of His Highness, who in any manner assisted the English during the course of the late war, shall be forgiven, and no ways molested for the same.
9. As soon as this Treaty is executed, the English forces shall be withdrawn from the dominions of His Highness, excepting such as may be necessary for the garrison of Chunar, or for the defence and protection of the King in the City of Allahabad, if His Majesty should require a force for that purpose.[28]

This is how the British occupied Bengal, and laid the foundation of further expansion.

[28] Aitchison, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

APPENDIX

Note on the Black Hole

THE STORY of the Black Hole is well known. According to the contemporary English, French and Dutch accounts, a ghastly tragedy occurred in Fort William after the seizure of Calcutta by Siraj-ud-daula in June 1756. Some 146 Europeans, these accounts say, were crowded into a little chamber, about eighteen feet square,[1] at 7 o'clock in the evening (20 June), and when it was opened next morning at 6, only twenty-three were found alive. How so many prisoners happened to be huddled together in a small chamber is summed up thus by Hill:

> Some European soldiers had made themselves drunk and assaulted the natives. The latter complained to the Nawab, who asked where the Europeans were accustomed to confine soldiers who had misbehaved in any way. He was told in the Black Hole, and, as some of his officers suggested it would be dangerous to leave so many prisoners at large during the night, ordered that they should all be confined in it.[2]

Contemporary narrators and later historians exonerate Siraj-ud-daula of an evil design: he was ignorant about the space in the chamber and the number of men to be imprisoned.

For a century and a half the accounts of the tragedy of the Black Hole went unchallenged. In the current century, several Indian writers questioned the veracity about the Black Hole and adduced their reasons to disprove it. The main reasons were: (1) A space of 324 square feet (or according to some accounts 267 square feet) could not accommodate as many as 146 persons, sitting or standing. (2) There is no mention of the tragedy in the accounts of contemporary Muslim historians. (3) There is no mention about it in the proceedings of Fulta, or in the letters exchanged between Clive and Watson on the one hand, and Siraj-ud-daula on the other, or in the treaty concluded in February 1757 between the English and the Nawab. It is emphasised that if the tragedy had really occurred, a provision for compensation to the surviving relatives of the dead was bound to be made in the treaty. (4) Holwell, who is supposed to be the author of what several Indian writers regard as a fabrication, is not considered reliable either by his colleagues in Bengal or by later historians. His close colleagues said he fabricated the death-bed story of Alivardi Khan. In his account of the fall of Calcutta, he talked of his bravery in staying at the post of duty in Fort William, while president Drake and others fled away. According to Clive, 'nothing but the want of a

[1] According to C. R. Wilson, the exact dimensions were eighteen feet by fourteen feet and ten inches (*Indian Church Review*).
[2] *Bengal in 1756-57*, vol. I. Introduction, p. xc.

boat prevented his escape and flight with the rest.'[3] When Holwell and Vansittart were accused of causelessly deposing Mir Jafar, Holwell fabricated several causes, one of which was: 'The Nawab Jaffar Allee Cawn was of a temper extremely tyrannical....Numberless are the instances of men, of all degrees, whose blood he has spilt without the least assigned reason.' Clive contradicted this statement: 'The horrible massacre wherewith' Mir Jafar 'is charged by Mr. Holwell ... have not the least foundation in truth. The several persons ... who were generally thought to have been murdered by his order, are all now living, except two.' (5) Hill, a careful researcher suggests: 'Probably the reference to the Black Hole is an amplification, for in the careless talk of Calcutta the Black Hole and Fort William seem to have been often confounded.

The first reason can be countered by a suggestion that a tyrant would not pause to think whether there was enough space to sit or stand; men can be callously thrown into a prison chamber in disregard of the space.

About the second, Raymond, the translator of the *Seir Mutacherin* (Ghulam Husain Khan's *Review of Modern Times*), attempts to give an answer in one of his footnotes:

> There is not a word here of those English shut up in the Black Hole to the number of 131, where they were mostly smothered. The truth is that the Hindustanees wanting only to secure them for the night, as they were to be presented the next morning to the Prince, shut them up in what they heard was the prison of the Fort, without having any idea of the capacity of the room; and indeed the English themselves had none of it. This much is certain, that this event, ... is not known in Bengal; and even in Calcutta, it is ignored by every man out of the four hundred thousand that inhabit that city; at least it is difficult to meet a single native that knows anything of it; so careless and incurious are the people. Were we therefore to accuse the Indians of cruelty, for such a thoughtless action, we would of course accuse the English, who intending to embark four hundred *Gentoo* Sipahees, destined for Madras, put them in boats, without one single necessary, and at last left them to be overset by the boar, where they all perished, after a three days' fast.[4]

Ghulam Husain Khan was both an 'actor and spectator' in the Bengal events of fifties and sixties; he wrote his book in Persian in 1780. It was translated by Frenchman Raymond in 1789, at the instance of Warren Hastings, 'who was anxious to have it translated into English'. Raymond had assumed the Muhammadan name of Haji Mustafa, but for some reason, he published his translation under the pseudonym of *Nota Manus*. Ghulam Husain Khan had turned traitor to Siraj-ud-daula who had antagonised the historian by confiscating his estate, as he himself says in the *Seir Mutaqkherin*.[5] Ghulam Husain Khan went over to the English, and by rendering whatever help he was capable of to the English and Mir Jafar in the pre-Plassey conspiracy, he got back his estate after the Nawabship had changed hands. He played a more conspicuous role

[3] Letter dated 31 January 1757 to William Mabbot, *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 186.
[4] *Seir Mutakherin*, p. 190. (Valmiki Press, Calcutta edition).
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 265.

as a traitor in Mir Kasim's war with the English. In 1780, when Ghulam Husain Khan wrote out his history, he was comfortably basking in the sunshine of prosperity he had secured for himself by his treacherous activities. Much of his book appears to have been written to order. He abuses Siraj-ud-daula to his heart's content, and welcoming the change says that it was 'decreed by Providence that the guilty race of Aaly-verdy-qhan should be deprived of an empire that had cost so much toil in rearing.'[6] He skips over many vital events whose account the English at that time would not have liked to be published. It is surprising that such a writer should consciously dismiss a tragedy like the Black Hole as of no concern to his history. Other Muslim writers, who give ample proof of their indebtedness to the British, also mention nothing about Black Hole.

Other reasons are also conjectural, and are negative in their approach. That the Black Hole was enacted is, on the other hand, supported by documentary evidence. Clive, in his letter dated 21 January 1757 to Seth Mahtab Rai and Maharaja Swarup Chand, complains:

> It would be unfolding a tale too horrible to repeat if I was to relate to you the horrid cruelties and barbarities inflicted upon an unfortunate people to whom the Nabob in a great part owes the riches and grandeur of his province. No less than 120 people, the greatest part of them gentlemen of family and distinction, being put to an ignominious death in one night and in such a manner as was quite inconsistent with the character of a man of courage or humanity, such as I have always heard the Nabob represented to be, and for this reason I believe it must have been done without his knowledge.[7]

Other confirmatory evidences are supplied by the following persons who wrote their independent accounts: (1) Grey (in his account of the loss of Calcutta, June 1756): 'But most of those that remained in the fort were put into the Black Hole to the number of 146, of whom 123 were miserably suffocated by the heat, occasioned by so many being shut up in so small a place.'[8] (2) Sykes (letter dated Kashimbazar 8 July 1756 to Fulta): 'Soldiers and officers to the number of 160 were put into a place called the Black Hole and jamed so close that out of 160 put in alive the next morning 110 was brought out dead for want of air.'[9] (3) Captain Grant (An account of the capture of Calcutta, dated July 13 1756): 'And such as were so unhappy as to be taken prisoners were at night put into the Black Hole, a place about 16 foot square, to the number of near 200 Europeans, Portugeese and Armenians, of which many were wounded. They were so crowded one upon another in this narrow confinement that by the heat and suffocation not above ten of the number survived until morning. Some of those who give us the account, say that they fired upon them all night with small arms through the doors and windows, but this is contradicted by others. Mr. Holwell is one of the number who survived, and is now prisoner with the Nabob.'[10] (4) Captain Mills (pocket book account, sixteen pages, octavo, 7 June to 1 July 1756):

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 189. [7] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 124.
[8] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 108-9. [9] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

'But most of those that remained in the fort were put into the Black Hole, to the number of 144 men, women, and children. Of whom upwards of 120 were miserably smuthered by the heat occasioned by so many being shut up in so small a place, as to be obliged to stand upon one another.'[11] (5) Holwell (letter dated 17 July 1756 to the English Councils at Bombay and Fort Saint George): 'The Nawab ordered myself and all the prisoners promiscuously to the number of about 165 or 170 to be crammed altogether into a small prison in the fort called the Black Hole, from whence only about 16 of us came out alive in the morning the rest being suffocated to death'.[12] In his letter dated 3 August 1756, to the Fort Saint George Council, Holwell corrects himself: 'I over reckoned the number of prisoners put into the Black Hole and the number of dead; the former being only 146 and the latter 123. I charged the Nawab with designedly having ordered the unheard-of piece of cruelty of cramming us all into that small prison; but I have no reason to think I did him injustice. His orders I learn was only general, "That we should be imprisoned that night, our number being too great to be at large." And being left to the mercy and direction of his *jemidars* and *burkandosses*, their resentment for the number of their brethren slain took this method of revenge.'[13] (6) John Cooke (secretary to Governor Drake in 1756, in his evidence before parliamentary inquiry committee, 1772): 'The number of souls thrust into this dungeon were near 150, among which was one woman and twelve of the wounded officers.... And when we were released, at eight o'clock the next morning, only 22 came out alive.'[14]

These accounts differ in the details of the tragedy, but are unanimous about the tragedy itself. From the difference in the figures of dead and alive one cannot conclude that the entire story is nothing but a fabrication; for it must have been almost impossible for the alive to count the total number of prisoners and the number of the dead and alive before moving out of the chamber in the morning. Of the authors of the above account, Holwell, Mills, and Cooke, were, according to their own statements, in the Black Hole. If it could be established that the story of the Black Hole was told, first of all, by Holwell, then those inclined to disbelieve it, might dismiss it as a fabrication as it came from Holwell. But Grey wrote his account in June 1756, when Holwell was the Nawab's prisoner. Sykes' account is also of an earlier date than Holwell's, but Sykes got the story from Holwell himself when the latter passed as a prisoner by Kasimbazar where the former was staying. Moreover, Grey (who was not in the Black Hole) gave 'correct' figures of the dead and alive as early as June, while Holwell (who was in the Black Hole) gave a wrong estimate as late as 17 July, and corrected himself as late as 3 August. The latter acceptance of the figures of 146 prisoners and 123 dead is based on Holwell's corrected account, and not on the earlier account of Grey. From what source Grey got his information is not known; by what means, Holwell corrected himself is also not known. One searches in vain to find out Grey's source of information, but, in the absence of positive evidence, it will be unfair to suggest that Holwell managed to contact Grey while the former was in prison, and passed on to him his 'fabrica-

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 43. [12] *Ibid.*, p. 115. [13] *Ibid.*, p. 186.
[14] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 302.

tion' about the Black Hole. If a suspicious mind were to be brought to bear upon the accounts of the event, one might say that the authenticity of the accounts credited to Grant and Mills is not absolute. Only a copy of Grant's account was available, when it was published in the *Indian Antiquary* for November 1899. It is not known to whom the letter containing the account was addressed. Hill presumes that it was addressed to Orme. 'Mills' pocket book' was also in the possession of Orme. Orme was not a wholly factual chronicler; as is discussed in the Introduction of this book, he had a tendency to suppress facts. It will be risky to suggest that he had a tendency to fabricate also.

But French and Dutch sources provide further evidence confirming the tragedy. On 3 July 1756 (while Holwell was still in prison), the French authorities at Chandra Nagar prepared an account of the English distress. In it, the following reference occurs about the Black Hole: 'About 160 Europeans who were taken in the fort were shut up in a chamber so small that they could only stand upright with their arms raised. The first night 132 died in it suffocated by the heat.'[15] Another French account is a letter dated Chandra Nagar 8 October 1756, from Baussett to Dupleix: 'They put in prison more than 120 persons, men and women, and forgot them there for seven days at the end of which time when it was opened, only 14 came out alive, the rest were dead.'[16] A Dutch letter dated 24 November 1756, from the Dutch Council at Hugli to the Supreme Council at Batavia, says: 'About 160 prisoners' were 'sent into the so-called Black Hole. They were trampled underfoot or suffocated, all but 15 or 16 were brought out half dead next morning.'[17]

From which sources, the French and Dutch gathered their information is not told; from the wording, however, it appears that the source was the current rumour.

Nevertheless, unless it be suggested that the different English accounts were the result of a concerted plan of fabrication, it will have to be accepted that some kind of tragedy did occur. In the absence of a positive proof as to the number of prisoners and the number of dead, it can be safely suggested that the natural human tendency to exaggerate manifested itself. Nobody ever counted the prisoners, nor the dead. Never was a complete list of the dead available. Grey's and Holwell's figures (146 prisoners and 123 dead) give the impression of precision, but in the absence of positive evidence, which they do not provide, they cannot be accepted as absolutely correct; as late as 1772, Cooke (whose statement about other affairs is more trustworthy than those of some of his colleagues) said that the number of prisoners was 'near 150'—'precise' statements were before him when he made his. According to Grey, there was only one woman in the Black Hole, while Mills says there were 'women' also. These disparities have remained unsolved, and one does not find oneself on sure ground to offer corrected figures. There were only a few hundred Europeans in Bengal in 1756, and it should not have been difficult to find out the names of the dead, but the names of only sixty-five have been traced out. There are no lists of persons who (1) were drowned in the effort to escape; (2) died fighting after the escape of Drake; and (3) perished in prison. About the sixty-five dead also, it has not been established beyond doubt

[15] Hill, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 50. [16] *Ibid.*, p. 230.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 304

that all of them died in the Black Hole.

One is therefore driven to the conclusion that the Black Hole was not as ghastly a tragedy as it has been made to appear. Nor was it so unique in a victor's diabolic conduct that researchers of the twentieth century should hang down their heads in shame, and endeavour to disprove it. The Black Hole tragedy belongs to the eighteenth century, but a hundred years later, when civilisation had advanced further, the British, who claimed their system of government to be more civilised than that of their Indian predecessors and held charge of the Indian administration, re-enacted the Black Hole—not in ignorance like Siraj-ud-daula but in full knowledge of it. Says Beveridge:

> Perhaps we ought not to say very much about the Black Hole, or regard it as a detestable instance of malignity on the part of Siraj-ud-daula seeing that a similar misadventure occurred in the Amritsar District on 1st August, 1857. Mr. Cooper tells us how a great number of captured sepoys were shut up in a large, round tower, or, bastion, and how, after 237 of them had been taken out and shot, it was reported that the remainder would not come out. "The doors were opened, and behold! they were nearly all dead. Unconsciously the tragedy of Holwell's Black Hole had been re-enacted....forty-five bodies—dead from fright, exhaustion, fatigue, heat and partial suffocation were dragged into light."[18]

The following extracts will give an idea of what the British did after the failure of the Revolt of 1757, called the first War of Indian Independence:

During this march, atrocities were committed in the burning of villages and massacre of innocent inhabitants at which Mohammad Tughlak himself would have stood ashamed (*Greater Britain* by Sir Charles Dilke).

General Havelock began to wreak a terrible vengeance for the death of Sir Hugh Wheeler. Batch upon batch of natives mounted the scaffold. The calmness of mind and nobility of demeanour which some of the revolutionaries showed at the time of death was such as would do credit to those who martyred themselves for devotion to a principle (*Indian Mutiny,* by Charles Ball).

After the siege was over, the outrages committed by our army are simply heart-rending. A wholesale vengeance is being taken without distinction of friend and foe. As regards the looting, we have indeed surpassed Nadir Shah! (*Life of Lord Lawrence*).

All the city people found within the walls when our troops entered were bayonetted on the spot; and the number was considerable, as you may suppose, when I tell you that in some houses forty or fifty persons were hiding (Montgomery Martin).

A general massacre of the inhabitants of Delhi, a large number of whom were known to wish us success, was openly proclaimed—(The Chaplain's Narrative of the Siege of Delhi, quoted by Kaye).

[18] H. Beveridge, in his paper, entitled 'Old Places in Murshidabad', contributed to the Calcutta Review, April 1892, p. 345. Last sentence from *The Crisis in the Punjab,* p. 162.

Some of the sepoys were still alive and they were mercilessly killed; but one of their number was dragged out to the sandy plain outside the house; he was pulled by his legs to a convenient place, where he was held down, pricked in the face and body by the bayonets of some of the soldiery, while others collected fuel for a small pyre; and when everything was ready—the man was roasted alive! These were Englishmen, and more than one officer saw it; no one offered to interfere! The horrors of this infernal cruelty were aggravated by the attempt of the miserable wretch to escape when half burnt to death. By a sudden effort he leaped away and, with the flesh of his body hanging from his bones, ran for a few yards ere he was caught, brought back, put on the fire again, and held there by bayonets, till his remains were consumed! (Russel's *Diary*).

Indians by hundreds were hanged from the branches of trees to terrorise the passersby.

In 1872, after the suppression of the Kuka revolt in the town of Malerkotla, a British deputy commissioner named Cowan of the district of Ludhiana, caused forty-nine prisoners to be blown away from guns. A trial was to be held, and Cowan had been asked to wait by his official superior, the commissioner. But so impatient was Cowan that he ignored the commissioner's order, and killed the men without the semblance of a trial.

In 1921, a worse Black Hole was perpetrated. After the Mopla revolt had been suppressed and many Moplas had been killed in action or by the sentences of court martial, about seventy (one version says 100) of those taken prisoner were huddled in a goods wagon for being transported from Calicut to Madras. South India's summer sun was scorching the iron wagon, and when the wagon was opened at the Podanoor railway station, it was found that 66 prisoners had died of suffocation and the rest were in a precarious condition.

Even during the period discussed in the present work, when the Black Hole came to be regarded as an event of oustanding shame, more condemnable scenes were enacted. Seldom did the English observe the time-honoured conventions of war. They usually made their attacks after midnight, and opened fire when their adversaries were either asleep or hurriedly getting up to meet the invaders. Such attacks always resulted in colossal loss of life on the other side. (Instances of such attacks are recorded in this book.)

In fact, the Black Hole did not deserve more notice than other events of killing in the later half of the eighteenth century.

Glossary

Arasdas: A written petition or memorial.
Arisbeggy: Officer in charge of Petition, aumils.
Aurangs: Factories for piece goods.
Bakhshi or *Bokshi*: Paymaster.
Bamjans: Indian brokers.
Batta: Allowance—*Bhatta.*
Beegas: About one-third of an acre—*bigha.*
Betels: Leaves of the piper betel, which Indians chew with areca-nut parings.
Bazars or *Buzars*: The markets of various commodities.
Chawbuck Sawr: A rough rider, groom or jockey.
Cheenapatan: Madras.
Chokeys or *Chowkies*: Checkpost—*Chauki.*
Cos or *Cors*: Nearly two miles. The real Indian word is *kos.*
Cowries: Shells used as the smallest coin.
Cutcherry: Zemindar's or Magistrates Court which dealt with the Indians only.
Dewan or *Diwan* or *Duan*: Officer in charge of revenue collection.
Diwani: The authority of collecting revenues.
Durbars: Courts of the Nawab.
Dustucks or *Dusticks*: Certificates that goods and merchandise belonged to the English Company and were therefore free from all tolls.
Etlack: Charges for guards placed upon accused persons so as to ensure their not leaving Calcutta before trial.
Farm or *Firman*: Edict.
Faujdar: Administrator.
Fauzdar's Dustic: Official permit.
Futtock: Indian word *Phatak*—a gate.
Gauts: Custom houses—Indian word *ghat, guzerbanns.*
Golahs: Houses for grain.
Gomastah or *Goumaster* or *Gumashta*: Agent.
Gunge: A market place.
Hauts: Weekly market—*hat.*
Jagat Seat: Jagat Seth—a big banker.
Jentue rajahs: Hindu landlords.
Karoorees or *kerows*: Crores (hundreds of million).
Katbarra: A duty levied on every new boat.
Kistibundee: An agreement for the stated payments of a sum of money to be discharged at different times.

Lack: *Lakh,* one lakh is equal to one hundred thousand.
Maunds: A *man* or *maund* weighs 82 lbs.
Mogol: Mughal.
Munsee: Teacher or clerk—*munshi.*
Mutsuddies: Clerks.
Nabob: Nawab—a provincial governor.
Navvies: Literally 'diggers'—probably the coolies employed in making entrenchments.
Nazaram: Present—*Nazrana.*
Nizamat: Military and Police Administration.
Padsha or *Patcha*: Padshah or Badshah (Emperor).
Peons: Country foot soldiers or attendants.
Pergunnahs: Subdivisions of a district.
Perwannah or *Parwana*: Order.
Peskhas or *Piscash*: A present.
Phirmaunds: Farmans.
Phyrmaund: Farman (see above).
Pund: The pund is eighty cowries.
Royroyan: The principal officer under the Dewan who has the immediate charge of the Crown land.
Ryots or *Riots*: Subjects.
Salams: Greetings.
Sardar: Military commander.
Sarkar: Government.
Saukar or *Sahikar*: Money-lender.
Sepoy or *Seapoy*: A soldier—*Sipahi.*
Shroffs: Bankers.
Siccas: Coins.
Sircarry: Official records.
Soubaship: Provincial government.
Subah or *Soubah*: Governor of a *Subah* (a province).
Syrang: Head boatman.
Tuncaws: Revenue assignments—*Taalook* (*Taluqa*).
Vackells: Agents—*vakils.*
Vaqueel or *Wakil*: Agent—*vakil.*
Vazir or *Vizir*: Minister.
Zamindari: The institution of landlords.
Zemindars or *Jemindars*: Landlords.

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